

# Long road to recovery:

## Key challenges faced by women farmers in the context of COVID-19

A study of women farmers from 12 states of India



August-September 2020

MAHILA KISAN ADHIKAAR MANCH - MAKAM

# Long road to recovery: Key challenges faced by women farmers in the context of COVID-19

A study of women farmers from 12 states of India



Year of the Study: August-September 2020



Year of publication: August 2021



## Research Team:

Aishwarya Rebelly; Arjita Mital; Gargie Mangulkar; Karen Pineiro; Manavi Das;  
Roshan Rathod; Sanghamitra Dubey; Sneha Bhat



## Editorial Support:

Seema Kulkarni, Samadrita Das and Gargie Mangulkar



## Advisory Team (list of all NFT Members)

Anita Paul; Anurita Hazarika; Archana Singh; Fatima Burnad; Gargie Mangulkar;  
Heera Jhangpangi; Kalamani; Karen Pineiro; Kavitha Kuruganti; Kavitha Srinivasan;  
Keerti K; Khaling Toshang; Mamta Kujur; Meera Raghavendra; Memorial Khongkai;  
Nafisa Barot Nesar Ahmed; Parul Chaudhary; Rajim Ketwas; Rashmirekha Borah;  
Richa Audichya; Roshan Rathod; S. Ashalatha; Sanya Seth; Seema Kulkarni;  
Seema Ravandale; Sejal Dand; Sharanya Nayak; Shilpa Vasavda; Shubhada Deshmukh;  
Soma KP; Sumitra Sharma; Usha Seethalakshmi; Usha Soolapani; V. Rukmini Rao;  
Vaishali Patil; Varsha Ganguly; Wekoweu 'Akole' Tsuhah



**MAHILA KISAN ADHIKAAR MANCH  
MAKAAM**

# List of participating organisations

(State wise list)

| State                 | Contact person                                                        | Organisations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Assam</b>          | Nilanju Dutta                                                         | North East Network                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Bihar</b>          | Poonam Kumari                                                         | Mahila Samakhya Federation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Gujarat</b>        | Karen Pineiro,<br>Manavi Das                                          | WGWLO, ANANDI                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Karnataka</b>      | Kavitha Srinivasan                                                    | MAKAAM Karnataka                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Madhya Pradesh</b> | Archana Singh;<br>Seema Ravandale                                     | PRADAN, People's Science Institute (PSI),<br>Foundation for Ecological Security (FES),<br>Community Development Centre (CDC),<br>Pararth,<br>Self-Reliant Initiatives through Joint Action<br>(SRIJAN),<br>National Institute of Women, Child, and<br>Youth Development (NIWCYD)                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Maharashtra</b>    | Sneha Bhat                                                            | Aamhi Aamchya Aarogyasathi, Abhijit<br>Bahuuddeshiy Sevabhavi Sanstha,<br>Anandashray Pratishthan, Ankur,<br>Dr Ambedkar Sheti Vikas Sanshodhan<br>Sanstha,<br>Foundation for Economy and Ecological<br>Development (FEED),<br>Jagar Pratishthan,<br>Prakriti,<br>Prerana Gram Vikas Sanstha,<br>Prerana Gram Vikas Sanstha,<br>Rajlaxmi Pratishthan,<br>Saad Samajik Sanstha,<br>Srujan,<br>Swarajmitra,<br>Ugam Gramin Vikas Sanstha and<br>Vikalp India |
| <b>Meghalaya</b>      | Phida Uriah                                                           | North East Network                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Nagaland</b>       | Wekoweu 'Akole'<br>Tsuah                                              | North East Network,<br>North East Initiative Development Agency<br>(NEIDA),<br>Rongmei Baptist Association (RBA)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Rajasthan</b>      | Parul Chaudhry,<br>Richa Audichya                                     | Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan,<br>Jan Chetna Sansthan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Uttar Pradesh</b>  | Sulekha Singh                                                         | Action India                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Uttarakhand</b>    | Anita Paul,<br>Heera Jhangpangi,<br>Roshan Rathod,<br>Seema Ravandale | Grassroots, People's Science Institute (PSI)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

# List of Abbreviations

---

|         |                                                       |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| APL     | : Above Poverty Line                                  |
| APMC    | : Agricultural Produce Market Committee               |
| ATMA    | : Agricultural Technology Management Agency           |
| BPL     | : Below Poverty Line                                  |
| CAMPA   | : Compensatory Fund Management and Planning Authority |
| COVID 1 | : Corona Virus Disease of 2019                        |
| DTNT    | : Denotified Tribes and nomadic tribes                |
| FPO     | : Farmers Producers Organisation                      |
| KVK     | : Krishi Vigyaan Kendra                               |
| NGO     | : Non-Governmental Organisation                       |
| NTFP    | : Non-Timber Forest Produce                           |
| OBC     | : Other Backward Class                                |
| PM      | : Pradhan Mantri                                      |
| PMGKY   | : Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana                  |
| SC      | : Scheduled Caste                                     |
| ST      | : Scheduled Tribe                                     |

---

# List of Tables and figures

## Chapter 2 Background and overview of the women

### 2.1 Location of the study

Table 1: State wise women respondents

### 2.2 Characteristics of women

Table 2: Characteristics of women

### 2.3 Membership of Institutions

Table 3: Membership of Institutions

### 2.4 Domestic violence

Table 4: Domestic Violence during the lockdown

## Chapter 3 Disruption of Livelihoods

### 3.1 Livelihood activities

Table 1: Livelihood activities of women

Table 2: Land ownership among all respondents

Table 3: Reduction in income during lockdown

### 3.2 Cultivators

Table 4: Land ownership among cultivators

Table 5: Season wise crops grown

Table 6: Kharif 2019 Marketing

Table 7: State wise variations in sale of APMC

Table 8: Harvesting pending during lockdown

Table 9: Challenges during harvesting for Rabi 2019-2020

Table 10: Challenges faced while selling produce during RABI 2019-20

Table 11: Season wise crops grown Kharif 2019 and Kharif 2020

Table 12: Challenges to procure agricultural inputs

Table 13: Challenges faced in Kharif 2020

Table 14: Source of inputs

Table 15: Plans for kharif 2020

Table 16: Anticipated difficulties in the next season

### 3.3 Agricultural labourers

Table 17: Land ownership among agricultural labourers

Table 18: Reduction in availability of work

Table 19: Availability of work days pre-covid and during lockdown

Table 20: Wage rates for Rabi harvest work in 2019 and during lockdown Rabi 2020

### 3.4 Livestock

Table 21: Category of livestock owned

Table 22: Challenges faced during the pandemic

Table 23: Illnesses faced by livestock during lockdown

Table 24: Methods of coping with health issues of livestock during lockdown

Table 25: Place of sale of livestock

Table 26: Use of livestock

Table 27: Measures taken when produce could not be sold

Table 28: Income during Lockdown months

Table 29: Insurance for the animals

Table 30: Support received during the lockdown

### 3.5 Forest workers

|          |                                                  |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Table 31 | Social Categories of NTFP Collectors             |
| Table 32 | Change in income                                 |
| Table 33 | Difficulties posed by Forest Department          |
| Table 34 | Threats of eviction faced by the NTFP Collectors |

### 3.6 Fisheries

|          |                                             |
|----------|---------------------------------------------|
| Table 35 | Type of fishing                             |
| Table 36 | Credit Requirement during lockdown          |
| Table 37 | Government support received during lockdown |
| Table 38 | Challenges for the upcoming season          |

### 3.7 Loans and liabilities

|          |                                                |
|----------|------------------------------------------------|
| Table 39 | Loans taken                                    |
| Table 40 | Repayment of loans taken pre-lockdown          |
| Table 41 | Source of loans before and during the lockdown |
| Table 42 | Mortgaging for the Loan                        |
| Table 43 | Reasons for loans during lockdown              |

## Chapter 4 Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana

### 4.1 Food security

|         |                                                    |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Table 1 | Availability of stored food grains during lockdown |
| Table 2 | Dependence on external agencies for food security  |
| Table 3 | Skipping meals during lockdown                     |
| Table 4 | Problems in securing food during the lockdown      |
| Table 5 | Name included in ration card                       |
| Table 6 | Months of receiving ration                         |

### 4.2 Benefits under PMGKY

|          |                                                        |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Table 7  | Type of Ration card                                    |
| Table 8  | Received the free food grain and pulses                |
| Table 9  | Support for food from sources other than PDS           |
| Table 10 | Sources of Food Support                                |
| Table 11 | Eligible for Pension                                   |
| Table 12 | Benefit of pensions under PMGKY                        |
| Table 13 | Jandhan Account                                        |
| Table 14 | Beneficiary of Ujjwala Gas scheme (PMUY)               |
| Table 15 | Beneficiary of PM Kisan Sanman Nidhi                   |
| Table 16 | Benefit received from P M Kisan Samman Nidhi for April |

### 4.4 MNREGA

|          |                                                     |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Table 17 | Possessing a Job Card                               |
| Table 18 | Number of MNREGA workdays available during lockdown |

## List of Figures

### Chapter 3 Disruption of Livelihoods

|          |                               |
|----------|-------------------------------|
| Figure 1 | Interventions during lockdown |
| Figure 2 | Types of Mortgage             |

### Chapter 4 Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana

|          |                                                 |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Figure 1 | Difficulties in withdrawing money from the bank |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------|



# Contents

## CHAPTERS .....

### Chapter 1: Introduction

|     |                                 |   |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|
| 1.1 | Background and Objectives ..... | 8 |
| 1.2 | Areas of Enquiry .....          | 9 |
| 1.3 | Methodology .....               | 9 |
| 1.4 | Structure of the Report .....   | 9 |
|     | References .....                | 8 |

### Chapter 2: Background of the women respondents

|     |                                  |    |
|-----|----------------------------------|----|
| 2.1 | Location of the Study .....      | 12 |
| 2.2 | Characteristics of women .....   | 13 |
| 2.3 | Membership to Institutions ..... | 13 |
| 2.4 | Domestic Violence .....          | 14 |

### Chapter 3: Disruptions in Livelihoods

|     |                              |    |
|-----|------------------------------|----|
| 3.1 | Livelihood Activities.....   | 16 |
| 3.2 | Cultivators .....            | 17 |
| 3.3 | Agricultural Labourers ..... | 24 |
| 3.4 | Livestock Rearing .....      | 25 |
| 3.5 | Forest Workers .....         | 29 |
| 3.6 | Fishery .....                | 30 |
| 3.7 | Loans and Liabilities.....   | 31 |

### Chapter 4: Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana

|     |                                                              |    |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 4.1 | Food Security .....                                          | 35 |
| 4.2 | Benefits under PMGKY .....                                   | 37 |
| 4.3 | Access to Banks .....                                        | 40 |
| 4.4 | Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act ..... | 40 |

### Chapter 5: Key findings, conclusions, and recommendations

|     |                                   |    |
|-----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 5.1 | Key findings and conclusions..... | 43 |
| 5.2 | Recommendations.....              | 45 |

# Preface and acknowledgements

---

As we bring this report on the impacts of the first wave of Covid-19 on women farmers, to the publication stage, we have already gone past the second wave and the uncertainty of the third wave is looming large. The crisis for women farmers has worsened in this past one year. Just as they were recovering from the first phase of the pandemic, the second wave came in and this time impacted the rural areas severely in terms of the disease. So, while the lockdown during the second wave was not as severe, the health impact was, thereby further disrupting their lives and livelihoods. Children continue to remain outside of the school as parents cannot afford smart phones and internet data, midday meals have stopped thereby affecting the nutrition of children, men are out of jobs, violence against women is on the rise and women's unpaid labour is increasing, just so that the family survives.

At the macro level the government does not seem to have learned its lessons from the first wave and continues to ignore the advice given by a number of experts to strengthen public systems like PDS, MNREGA by investing in them. The state has further unleashed its powers by introducing the anti-people labour codes, farm laws, amendments in the EIA and further dispossessed the poor and the marginalised communities. In forest areas, new coal blocks were sanctioned, and mining was declared as an essential service so the industry could function at higher efficiency with no protest or constraint of community responses as people were in lockdown. The period was also marked with inflation and price rise in fuel and food item prices did not help communities to cope.

We would like to state upfront that the study has some shortcomings due to the lengthy data collection process and also because of inadequate data that made it difficult to attribute certain impacts to the pandemic induced lockdown. The selection of our sample depended on the reach of state level members. This also meant that findings were not amenable to cross comparisons across states, different livelihood activities or different social categories. While all our respondents were women, it cannot be deduced from the responses that the impacts were specific to women, except in cases where they were single or were female headed

households.

It is our hope that this report would help in both policy and practice in the recognition of women farmers.

The study was conceptualised at the National webinar organised by MAKAAAM in May 2020 to understand the impacts of the pandemic on women farmers. We thank all the participants at the webinar, whose insights and sharing helped develop the study idea.

The young research team of MAKAAAM took on the responsibility with support from the NFT members of developing the questionnaire, organising trainings with the enumerators, and supporting them through the data gathering process.

Thanks also to all of the enumerators who assiduously gathered all of the data and also gave their valuable, timely feedback during the training sessions.

We extend our thanks to the "WFA-Kaagapay fund to support feminist resilience in the face of COVID-19".

We would also like to thank SOPPECOM for anchoring this study and providing the required administrative support.

We extend our sincere thanks to all the participating organisations and the people who connected us with these organisations across the 12 states. They connected us with the women farmers.

And finally, our deepest acknowledgements to the women farmers. This study would not have been possible without the participation of over a thousand women from across the 12 states of the country.

The delays in gathering data, processing it, and further getting to the stage of publication has been a big setback for the alliance. However, we do feel it our duty to present the data that was collected by speaking to a thousand women across 12 states who spared their precious time amidst the huge humanitarian crisis that we are in presently. We believe we owe it to the women farmers!

**National Facilitation Team, MAKAAAM**

August 15, 2021





*Women working in the  
fields in Maharashtra*



*Women farmers in  
Maharashtra receiving  
ration kits during  
lockdown*



# Introduction

## 1.1 Background and objectives

COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown led to widespread distress among various sections of the population. Various studies conducted over the past one year have shown the effects of the first wave of the pandemic and the lockdown on the poor, especially migrant workers (CLRA 2020; SWAN 2020). Studies have also shown how frontline workers like the ASHAs have borne a disproportionate burden of the pandemic (Dasgupta and Mitra). SEWA-Bharat's (2020) study has documented the impacts on women workers engaged in several trades. Several studies have also highlighted the hardships on women, decline in employment, impacts on food insecurity and hunger and the growing indebtedness among women (Agarwal 2021; CSE 2020; CSO 2020). Household economies turned more to depend on women's savings - to bring home returnee migrant menfolk from the cities, and to sustain families during months of income loss. Meanwhile women were also compelled to take multiple loans, mostly from private sources on higher interest rates as families were themselves reeling under the crunch of lack of income flows. Indebtedness and women's burden of debt are reported to have increased in this period (Bera 2020).

One of the most significant impacts of the pandemic has been on the loss of jobs and livelihoods for both men and women. However, analysis of national level data pointed to a very delayed recovery for women to get back into employment (Deshpande 2020).

Reports in the initial phase of the first wave did highlight the impacts on farmers in

harvesting and marketing of the produce, but very little was said about women farmers, especially single women farmers. Some state level studies did document the impact on women cultivators and agricultural labourers, but little was known about women farmers across various sectors and states (Kulkarni 2020; MAKAAAM Maharashtra 2020).

Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAAM) in its first national webinar held on 29 May 2020 reviewed the situation. More than 75 members of the network across 12-15 states had participated in the webinar and shared the hardships faced by women farmers working in forests, livestock, fisheries, or in cultivation and as wage labourers in meeting livelihoods. While food insecurity and lack of cash in hand emerged as the key issues, women farmers also pointed out the impact on harvesting and marketing of produce from farms and forests and allied sectors. FPOs run by women farmers highlighted the need for bridge funds, cultivators wanted access to seed and other agricultural inputs, wage labourers were in need for employment under MNRGA, livestock was affected due to lack of fodder etc.

With less access to subsistence resources from their own produce and from the commons, food intake was also constrained. The impact of this fell largely on girls and women and women's capacity to support each other in their collectives was also reduced. Stocks of seed were consumed for food and left households having to depend on market sources or without adequate seed and cash and other inputs for the next planting season. Their ability to enter tenancy

arrangements was also reduced. In migrant returnee households, the entire family was quarantined, and no one could go to work, the conditions of hunger and violence reported at this time were alarming. Also threats of withdrawal of girl children from schools, early marriage and trafficking were high in remote areas. Attacks on Dalit and nomadic girls and women involved in foraging and pastoralist activity or even for defecation were shared by the participants

The diverse impacts required a systematic documentation for articulation of demands for various relief measures on the one hand and also to inform MAKAAAM's own relief work.

This webinar thus prompted the need for a national level study on impacts of the first wave of COVID-19, the findings of which could be shared with the Government for extending support to the women farmers.

The study was finalised in the month of July 2020 and data was collected from across 11 states in the period between August 4 and September 10, 2020

## 1.2 Areas of enquiry

Given this brief background to the study, an enquiry was made in the following areas

- Food security
- Impacts on livelihoods of women farmers engaged in cultivation, agricultural wage labour, livestock, forests, and fisheries.
- Access to relief measures announced under PMGKY
- Health, hygiene, and domestic violence

## 1.3 Methodology

After the national webinar, a young team of volunteers in MAKAAAM developed the questionnaire for a large-scale quantitative study. The tool was finalised in consultation with the National Facilitation Team (NFT) of

MAKAAAM as well as other interested members of the alliance.

Willingness to gather data was expressed by MAKAAAM members from across 11 states of the country. Due to COVID-19 restrictions it was decided that data collection could be done through telephonic interviews and wherever feasible in person.

The data was collected through the COLLECT app for 930 participants across these states. The data was mainly collected in person using the mobile application Collect which is a CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interview) tool that enables sharing of a survey tool electronically with data enumerators. The questionnaire was developed in English; however, translations were done into all the local state languages for ease of data collection.

Selection of women participants was largely dependent on the contacts of the local organisations, but an effort was made to get a reasonable representation of the sections of women farmers that form the core constituency of MAKAAAM.

The selection process makes it evident then that the findings would not be amenable to cross comparisons across states, different livelihood activities or different social categories. While all our respondents were women, it cannot be deduced from the responses that the impacts were specific to women, except in cases where they were single or were female headed households.

In each of the sections we have pointed out the limitations in both the data and methodology

## 1.4 Structure of the Report

The report includes five chapters. The first chapter gives an introduction to the study, discusses the background, objectives and the methodology; the second chapter gives the details about the characteristics of the women respondents and also an overview of the health and hygiene related issues and incidence of domestic violence; the third discusses impacts

on livelihoods of women farmers engaged in cultivation, agricultural labour, collection of NTFP, livestock and fisheries; the fourth chapter looks at the access of women farmers to the relief measures announced under the PMGKY and implementation of the MNREGA; the final chapter discusses the key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## References

1. Agarwal, B. (2021). Livelihoods in COVID Times: Gendered perils and new pathways in India. *World Development*, 139 105312. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X20304393>. Accessed March 2021
2. Bera, S. (2020, August 17). Stories of distress from small borrowers. *Mint*. Retrieved from <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/stories-of-distress-from-small-borrowers-11597585864192.html>
3. Centre for Labour Research and Action (CLRA), et.al. (2020). *Rapid Assessment of Unorganised, Informal and Migrant Workers*. 6687c0d7-6bdd-4c8c-a6ab-98c79ef70d11. pdf. Accessed March 2021
4. Centre for Sustainable Employment (CSE). (2020) *COVID-19 Livelihood Survey*. [https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Compilation-of-findings-APU-COVID-19-Livelihoods-Survey\\_Final.pdf](https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Compilation-of-findings-APU-COVID-19-Livelihoods-Survey_Final.pdf). Accessed March 2021.
5. Central Statistical Organization CSO. (2020). *COVID - 19 induced Lockdown-How is the Hinterland Coping?* <https://ruralindiaonline.org/library/resource/covid-19-induced-lockdown-how-is-the-hinterland-coping/>. Accessed March 2021.
6. Dasgupta, J. and Sona, M. (2020). A Gender-responsive Policy and Fiscal Response to the Pandemic," *Economic & Political Weekly*. 55 (22) <https://www.epw.in/journal/2020/22/commentary/gender-responsive-policy-and-fiscal-response.html> Accessed July 2021.
7. Deshpande, A. (2020). *The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown: First order effects on Gender Gaps in Employment and Domestic Time Use in India*. GLO Discussion Paper No. 607. Global Labour Organization, Essen. This version available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/222416>
8. Government of India (GOI). (2020). *Finance Minister announces Rs 1.70 Lakh Crore relief package under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana for the poor to help them fight the battle against Corona Virus*. Ministry of Finance. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1608345>. Accessed March 2021
9. Kulkarni, S. (2020). Locked in a crisis: Concerns of rural women, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 55 (23). <https://www.epw.in/journal/2020/23/commentary/locked-crisis.html> Accessed July 2021
10. Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAM). (2020). *Unlocking the Crisis: Understanding impacts of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdown on single women farmers of Maharashtra*. <https://www.soppecom.org/pdf/Unlocking%20the%20crisis-english-final%20report210620.pdf>. Accessed March 2021.
11. SEWA Bharat. (2020). *Gendered precarity in the lockdown: What the lockdown shows us about the precarity of women workers*. [https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/file/Gendered\\_Precarity\\_SB\\_Lockdown.pdf](https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/file/Gendered_Precarity_SB_Lockdown.pdf). Accessed March 2021
12. Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN). (2020). *32 Days and Counting: COVID-19 Lockdown, Migrant Workers, and the Inadequacy of Welfare Measures in India*. <https://ruralindiaonline.org/library/resource/21-days-and-counting-covid-19-lockdown-migrant-workers-and-the-inadequacy-of-welfare-measures-in-india/>. Accessed March 2021.







*Two women farmers  
from Uttarakhand*



*Women farmers  
from Uttarakhand*



# Background of the women respondents

## 2.1 Location of the study

The present study was done across 11 states of Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand with a total of 930 participants. Madhya Pradesh had a majority of the participants at 14 %, followed by Maharashtra at 13 % and Uttarakhand at 11% (See Table 1).

The pandemic brought to the fore debates about sanitation, health, and hygiene. Discussions that did not take place in everyday conversations became a part of the everyday life. The precautions that were advised had to be followed, and also to ensure that one's safety was maintained in the process. There were a number of precautions that needed to

be taken in order to avoid getting infected and these were detailed out by the respondents. Most of them followed the practice of frequent handwashing, covering the face with a mask maintaining physical distance. However, they shared how difficult it was to maintain distances in small houses or sometimes even in public spaces.

Using masks did not come easy to many of them. Women also narrated how lack of water was a major impediment in maintaining hygiene through frequent handwashing.

Women complained that it was the men who stepped outside of the houses and thus posed a threat to the family members. The lockdown had clearly impacted the mobility of the women.

**Table 1: State wise women respondents**

| State          | No. of respondents | %          |
|----------------|--------------------|------------|
| Assam          | 50                 | 5          |
| Bihar          | 100                | 11         |
| Gujarat        | 115                | 12         |
| Karnataka      | 30                 | 3          |
| Madhya Pradesh | 133                | 14         |
| Maharashtra    | 124                | 13         |
| Meghalaya      | 49                 | 5          |
| Nagaland       | 50                 | 5          |
| Rajasthan      | 87                 | 9          |
| Uttar Pradesh  | 91                 | 10         |
| Uttarakhand    | 101                | 11         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>930</b>         | <b>100</b> |



## 2.2 Characteristics of the women

The age groups of the participants ranged between the ages of 20-90 years. Majority of the respondents (47%) belonged to the age group of 20-40, while 32% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 41-50 years and the rest were more than 50 years of age.

Of the total 930 respondents, 74% were married and 26% are single women. The composition of single women includes 20% widows. The others were either deserted, divorced, separated or unmarried.

The educational status varied vastly across the population - 41% of the respondents had not received any kind of formal education, 30% of the respondents were educated till the fifth standard, and 21% of the respondents were educated till the 10th standard.

The participants came from different caste categories - 34% of the participants belonged to the Other Backward Class (OBC), 33% to the Scheduled Tribes (STs), 16% to the Scheduled Castes (SCs), 15% to the General Category, and 2% to the Denotified Tribes.

## 2.3 Membership to Institutions

Of the 930 women, 640 (69%) were members of SHGs while 250 (27%) were members of Farmer interest groups formed by local NGOs. The highest number of memberships to SHGs were from Maharashtra followed by Uttarakhand. Gujarat had a large number of women who were members of co-operatives while Uttarakhand had women who belonged to FPOs. Very few women were part of the water committees or CFR committees. A small number of women were part of the Panchayat samiti in different leadership positions. Respondents from Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh who were members of various institutions, reported that they received information and awareness about COVID-19. SHGs and FPOs provided monetary support to their members. Moreover, during the lockdown members of FPOs were able to sell their produce to the FPO.

**Table 2: Characteristics of women**

| Age                           | Respondents | %          |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| 20-40 years                   | 441         | 47         |
| >40-50 years                  | 298         | 32         |
| >50 years                     | 191         | 21         |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Marital Status</b>         |             |            |
| Deserted                      | 16          | 2          |
| Divorced                      | 7           | 1          |
| Married                       | 691         | 74         |
| Separated                     | 12          | 1          |
| Unmarried                     | 16          | 2          |
| Widow                         | 188         | 20         |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Education</b>              |             |            |
| Graduate and above            | 24          | 3          |
| Not received formal education | 377         | 41         |
| Up to 10th standard           | 198         | 21         |
| Up to 12th standard           | 49          | 5          |
| Up to 5th standard            | 282         | 30         |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Caste category</b>         |             |            |
| DNT                           | 22          | 2          |
| General                       | 140         | 15         |
| OBC                           | 314         | 34         |
| SC                            | 150         | 16         |
| ST                            | 304         | 33         |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |

**Table 3: Membership of Institutions**

| Institutions            | Respondents | %  |
|-------------------------|-------------|----|
| Self Help Groups (SHGs) | 640         | 69 |
| FPO                     | 59          | 6  |
| Cooperatives            | 66          | 7  |
| Pani Samiti             | 12          | 1  |
| CFR Committee           | 7           | 1  |
| Groups formed by NGOs   | 250         | 27 |
| Others                  | 19          | 2  |

Women who were members of some institutions benefitted from them in terms of relief measures. They also mobilised themselves to get government support in terms of ration and employment. A small number of women also said that they received emotional support through their social groups.

## 2.4 Domestic violence

Analysis of national data had pointed to the increasing instances of domestic violence (SEWA, 2020). The National commission for Women had set up a helpline and received several calls in the first wave of the pandemic as was reported by them. The UN Women brought out a report and referred to domestic violence as 'shadow pandemic'. We thus thought that it would be important to make the enquiry with the women farmers as well.

Reporting on domestic violence has always been a sensitive issue for women. During the pandemic, when resources in the households were rapidly depleting and livelihoods were being disrupted, women bore the brunt of unpaid work and violence at home. However, this was not a story that they thought was important as they were food insecure and faced a crisis as never before. Most women, as we interpret it, thus refrained from reporting on domestic violence. Of the 930 respondents only 59 (6%) reported that they faced violence at home and 41 (4.4%) said that they would not like to disclose. Among those that did report to facing violence, the majority said that

**Table 4: Domestic Violence during the lockdown**

| Domestic Violence during the lockdown | Respondents | %          |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Yes                                   | 59          | 7          |
| No                                    | 824         | 89         |
| Do not wish to disclose               | 41          | 4          |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>924</b>  | <b>100</b> |

violence had taken place during the lockdown and for the rest it was a routine matter.

But the reported reason for violence indicates the frustrations resulting due to scarce resources at home. For example, women reported that arguments occurred over limited family savings, limited food available in the house and absence of work. These arguments then turned violent, and women bore the brunt of it. Women also reported that helplines were not available, and neither were the police helping them.

Due to lockdown and fear many did not venture out to speak with their friends who are otherwise an important support system. Some of them however did access support from the local women's groups or NGOs.

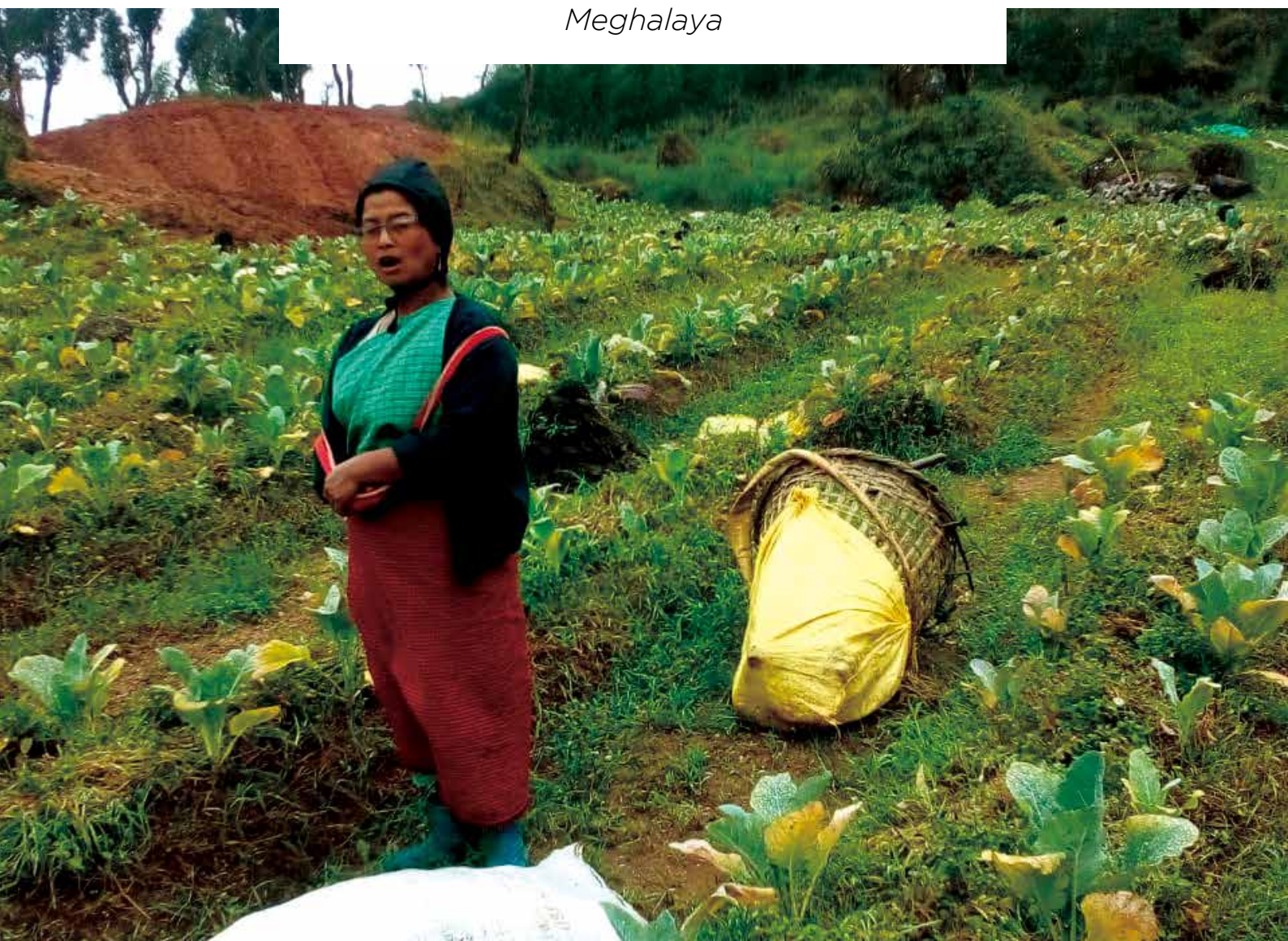
Women also reported violence, harassment, and abuse outside of their homes, especially from the police while trying to market their produce or while gathering non timber forest produce from the forests.







*Women farmers working on their fields in Meghalaya*





## Chapter 3

# Disruption of livelihoods

### 3.1 Livelihood activities

Women farmers are engaged in diverse livelihood activities. This was evident from the data where multiple responses were selected by the respondents. A large majority (65%) of the sample was engaged in cultivation,

followed by livestock rearing (40%) and agricultural wage labour (29%). Among the single women, the highest number was engaged in cultivation (65%) followed by agriculture labour (38%) and livestock (29%). The table below represents women's engagement in multiple activities (Table 1).

**Table 1: Livelihood activities of women**

| Livelihood               | All respondents (N=930) |    | Single women (N=239) |    |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----|----------------------|----|
|                          | Respondents             | %  | Respondents          | %  |
| Cultivation              | 610                     | 66 | 155                  | 65 |
| Agricultural labour      | 270                     | 29 | 90                   | 38 |
| NTFP collection          | 43                      | 5  | 11                   | 5  |
| Livestock rearing        | 372                     | 40 | 69                   | 29 |
| Fishing                  | 31                      | 3  | 3                    | 1  |
| Non-farm village trade   | 20                      | 2  | -                    | -  |
| Non-farm village service | 22                      | 2  | -                    | -  |
| Seasonal Migration       | 38                      | 4  | -                    | -  |
| Others                   | 52                      | 56 | -                    | -  |

**Table 2: Land ownership**

| Ownership      | All Respondents (N=930) |            | Single women (N=239) |            |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|
|                | Respondents             | %          | Respondents          | %          |
| Landless       | 553                     | 60         | 148                  | 62         |
| 1-3acres       | 238                     | 26         | 49                   | 21         |
| 3-5 acres      | 68                      | 7          | 23                   | 10         |
| 5-10acres      | 45                      | 5          | 16                   | 7          |
| 10-25 acres    | 12                      | 1          | 3                    | 1          |
| Above 25 acres | 14                      | 2          | -                    | -          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>930</b>              | <b>100</b> | <b>239</b>           | <b>100</b> |

## Land ownership

If we look at the landholding of the respondents, we see that

Among 239 single women 148 (62%) are landless and 49 (21%) respondents belong to families with landholding between 1-3 acres. This shows that a majority are landless or small and marginal farmers (Table 2).

## Reduction in incomes during lockdown

The impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods, especially for individuals belonging to the informal economy, has been immense and disruptive. The source of income in these households was impacted due to the lockdown, 43 % of the households did not have a salaried income, and 46% of the respondents reported a reduction in income (Table 3). However, the situation was exacerbated as they did not have any cash in hand to purchase food from the open markets. The PDS not only had an uneven outreach at the time, but several were completely excluded from access to food. We will examine this in the next chapter.

**Table 3: Reduction in income during lockdown**

| Reduction in your family's salaried income during the lockdown | Respondents | %          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| No salaried income source within family                        | 404         | 43         |
| No reduction during the lockdown                               | 101         | 11         |
| Faced reduction during the lockdown                            | 425         | 46         |
| <b>Total</b>                                                   | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |

## 3.2 Cultivators

### Background of the cultivators

As mentioned earlier, of the total 930 respondents, 610 (65%) are engaged in cultivation. Among these, 28% are landless households while 50% belong to households

owning less than three acres of land and 13% to households owning between 3-5 acres of land (Table 4).

**Table 4: Land Possession by Cultivators**

| Ownership      | Respondents     | %          |
|----------------|-----------------|------------|
|                | Number of women |            |
| Landless       | 168             | 28         |
| 1-3acres       | 306             | 50         |
| 3-5 acres      | 81              | 13         |
| 5-10acres      | 33              | 5          |
| 10-25 acres    | 9               | 2          |
| Above 25 acres | 13              | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>610</b>      | <b>100</b> |

To understand the overall background of the respondents with reference to their farming activities, we asked them questions about the Kharif (monsoon) period in 2019, i.e., prior to the lockdown. The data shows that the majority of them grow food grains and cereals (74%), followed by vegetables (41%) and pulses (29%) (Table 5).

The average per acre cost of cultivation as reported by the women for a diverse set of crops is between Rs. 10,000-30,000. Even in regular times, women reported difficulties in harvesting produce due to shortage of labour and also high wages. They also reported constraints in storage of produce and non-availability of transport for marketing.

As regards marketing of produce, in general women have always sold to private traders and in local markets traders and this was evident from the response for the sales prior to the lockdown. Most of the respondents reported selling their produce in the local markets (51%) or to private traders (26%) in the mandis or the state regulated markets also known as the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC). Interestingly 19% respondents did say that they sold at the mandis directly. They chose to sell to private traders because cash transactions happen immediately and in several cases the payments are settled against



**Table 5: Season wise crops grown**

| Crops cultivated   | Kharif 2019 |            | Kharif 2020 |            |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|                    | Respondents | %          | Respondents | %          |
| Grains and Cereals | 420         | 74         | 483         | 86         |
| Pulses             | 169         | 30         | 188         | 33         |
| Fruits             | 37          | 7          | 30          | 5          |
| Vegetables         | 236         | 42         | 237         | 42         |
| Millets            | 66          | 12         | 57          | 10         |
| Fodder Crops       | 65          | 12         | 69          | 12         |
| Spices             | 67          | 12         | 50          | 9          |
| Cash Crops         | 48          | 8          | 51          | 9          |
| Forest Produce     | 8           | 1          | 2           | 0          |
| Flowers            | 1           | 0          | 1           | 0          |
| Others             | 33          | 6          | 0           | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>565</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>563</b>  | <b>100</b> |

the advances taken by the women farmers for seed or other agricultural inputs. Moreover, women reported that documents such as the land records are not required in selling the produce to the private traders. The overall volume of their produce is small and therefore it is not economical to sell it in distant mandis. Mandis are also very male dominated spaces which is another reason for them to sell their produce in the local markets (Table 6).

**Table 6: Kharif 2019 Marketing**

| Place of selling of Kharif 2019 | Responses | %  |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----|
| APMC                            | 110       | 19 |
| Pvt traders in the mandi        | 146       | 26 |
| Pvt traders at the farm         | 77        | 14 |
| Local market                    | 286       | 51 |
| Other                           | 39        | 7  |

Variations across states were reported with Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh seeing more sales in the APMC as compared with some other states like Uttarakhand for example (See table 7).

**Table 7: State wise variations in sale of APMC**

| State          | APMC       | %          |
|----------------|------------|------------|
| Assam          | -          | -          |
| Bihar          | 4          | 4          |
| Gujarat        | 6          | 6          |
| Karnataka      | -          | -          |
| Madhya Pradesh | 19         | 16         |
| Maharashtra    | 40         | 36         |
| Meghalaya      | -          | -          |
| Nagaland       | -          | -          |
| Rajasthan      | 17         | 16         |
| Uttar Pradesh  | 22         | 20         |
| Uttarakhand    | 2          | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>110</b> | <b>100</b> |

Given this brief background, we shall see the impacts on cultivators during the lockdown and the challenges that the lockdown posed for the Kharif and Rabi season of 2020.

### Problems during lockdown

The lockdown was announced in March 2020 at a time when harvesting of the Rabi (winter) crops was either going on or had just been

completed. Women reported the difficulties they faced as a result of the lockdown for harvesting and marketing the produce of Kharif 2019 and Rabi 2019-2020. They also reported the challenges that they anticipated during the I Kharif and Rabi season of 2020-2021.

There were a number of challenges that women farmers faced during the lockdown while harvesting and selling the rabi crop.

#### Harvesting of produce during lockdown

When the lockdown was announced in March 2020, of the 522 cultivators who responded, 211 (40%) reported that they were yet to harvest their produce and 20% said they had partially harvested the produce (Table 8).

**Table 8: Harvesting pending during lockdown**

| Harvest Process Pending | Respondents | %          |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Yes                     | 207         | 40         |
| Partially               | 104         | 20         |
| No                      | 211         | 40         |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>522</b>  | <b>100</b> |

Variations were seen across states and 81% of the respondents from Uttar Pradesh reported not harvesting their produce at all. This was followed by Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan with 61%, 60% and 52% respondents respectively saying that they were yet to begin harvesting.

The reasons cited by the respondents were difficulties in hiring labour (41%); increased cost of labour (44%); non-availability of harvesters and other machinery (21%); closure of transport (25%). A sizeable 9.2% of the respondents said that they could not commute to the village where they owned or cultivated land. About 19% said they did not have cash in hand to either hire labour or pay for transport. Women also said that there were damages to the crop due to delays in harvesting (Table 9).

**Table 9: Challenges during harvesting for Rabi 2019-2020**

| Challenges                                                               | No. of Rspondents | %  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----|
| Labour was not available                                                 | 214               | 41 |
| More wages had to be paid                                                | 228               | 44 |
| No machines were found for harvesting and processing                     | 113               | 22 |
| Transport was not available                                              | 134               | 26 |
| As the farm was in another village, I could not go there due to lockdown | 48                | 9  |
| There was not enough money at hand                                       | 101               | 19 |
| Unable to harvest due to restrictions                                    | 32                | 6  |
| Crops were spoilt/ damage                                                | 53                | 10 |
| Other                                                                    | 9                 | 2  |

#### Marketing of produce during lockdown

Further marketing their produce too proved to be a challenge. Lack of transportation compelled them to sell locally at whatever price that was available. Access into and outside of villages was also restricted during the lockdown, so despite the fact that agriculture was kept out of the restrictions, in reality sales had become difficult. A few respondents also reported a drop in prices and police violence when they went out to market their produce. As a result, their produce was damaged, and it had to be sold within the village and thus did not fetch the expected price.

Among our respondents 37% reported that marketing became difficult as access to villages was either restricted or blocked. About 17% reported police action and violence when they tried to venture out. Lack of transport to ferry the produce was cited as a reason by 31% of the respondents and 30% reported high transportation as also a reason for moving the produce out of the village. As a result of all these reasons 14% reported that produce had to be sold in the village or neighbourhood; 15% said that their goods were damaged, especially fruits and vegetables. About 15% reported that their goods were damaged in storage itself; 15% reported that they did not get the anticipated prices (See table 10).

**Table 10: Challenges faced while selling produce during RABI 2019-20**

| Challenges during selling produce                                  | Responses (N=522) | %  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----|
| Access restricted/ blocked at village level due to lockdown        | 191               | 37 |
| Access restricted/ blocked due to police violence or police action | 91                | 17 |
| Damaged vegetables / fruits                                        | 80                | 15 |
| Goods were damaged in storage.                                     | 78                | 15 |
| Lack of transport to take produce to market                        | 164               | 31 |
| Transportation costs increased                                     | 154               | 30 |
| Produce had to be sold in the village/ locally                     | 73                | 14 |
| We had to wait for days for our turn to sell                       | 34                | 7  |
| Did not get the expected price                                     | 80                | 15 |
| Others                                                             | 8                 | 2  |
| None of the above                                                  | 141               | 27 |

The location for marketing the produce did not change very much during the pandemic as the reasons for selling to local traders did not change during the lockdown. However, the restricted entry of private traders did impact the sales.

## Challenges for the sowing seasons of Kharif and Rabi 2020

### Cropping pattern

Respondents were asked about the crops they cultivated in Kharif of 2019, Rabi of 2019-20 and the crops they are likely to cultivate in the Kharif of 2020. As seen in Table 11 in 2019 Kharif, 74% reported growing food grains and while in Kharif of 2020, 86% reported that they would prefer to grow food grains. Similarly, 30% reported growing pulses in Kharif 2019 and 33% said they would grow pulses in Kharif of 2020. The rest of the cropping patterns would remain the same both in the pre- and post-lockdown seasons. (Table 11)

It is likely that more households are now choosing to diversify their crops, growing food grains along with other crops, clearly motivated to ensure food security for their families.

### Access to agricultural inputs

Of the 610 cultivators, 563 responded to the challenges they would face during the Kharif 2020 sowing season. At the time of data collection (August 2020), sowing for Kharif was completed. Women said that they faced several challenges in accessing agricultural inputs, credit and hiring labour in a timely manner. About 43% of the respondents reported difficulty in accessing seeds, and 33% of the respondents reported facing difficulties in accessing fertilizers and pesticides (See Table 12).

They also reported that these difficulties were a result of increase in prices of seed (49%), fertilisers (31%) and other inputs. Similarly, 13% mentioned that borrowing had become difficult.



**Table 11: Season wise crops grown Kharif 2019 and Kharif 2020**

| Crops Grown        | Kharif 2019 |     | Kharif 2020 |     |
|--------------------|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|
|                    | Respondents | %   | Respondents | %   |
| Grains and Cereals | 420         | 74  | 483         | 86  |
| Pulses             | 169         | 30  | 188         | 33  |
| Fruits             | 37          | 7   | 30          | 5   |
| Vegetables         | 236         | 42  | 237         | 42  |
| Millets            | 66          | 12  | 57          | 10  |
| Fodder Crops       | 65          | 12  | 69          | 12  |
| Spices             | 67          | 12  | 50          | 9   |
| Cash Crops         | 48          | 8   | 51          | 9   |
| Forest Produce     | 8           | 1   | 2           | 0   |
| Flowers            | 1           | 0   | 1           | 0   |
| Others             | 33          | 6   | 0           | 0   |
| Total              | 565         | 100 | 563         | 100 |

**Table 12: Challenges to procure agricultural inputs**

| Challenges to procure agricultural inputs                    | Respondents (N=563) | %   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----|
| Difficulty in accessing seeds                                | 244                 | 43  |
| Difficulty in accessing fertilizers and pesticides           | 183                 | 33  |
| Increase in prices of seeds                                  | 277                 | 49  |
| Increase in prices of fertilizers and pesticides             | 173                 | 31  |
| Did not get seeds in time                                    | 156                 | 28  |
| Difficulties in accessing credit                             | 73                  | 13  |
| Difficulties in borrowing seeds, fertilizers, etc. on credit | 71                  | 13  |
| No labour available                                          | 67                  | 12  |
| Labour available but at higher cost                          | 93                  | 17  |
| Others                                                       | 53                  | 9.4 |

The agricultural season of Kharif 2020 was thus a daunting season for the respondents as can be seen from the table below. Respondents reported a number of challenges in cultivating crops in the Kharif 2020 season. Increase in prices of seeds were reported by 49% of the

cultivators while 43% reported difficulties in accessing seeds; 33% faced difficulties in accessing fertilisers and pesticides and 31% reported an increase in prices of fertilisers and pesticides as a major challenge during Kharif (See table 13).

**Table 13: Challenges faced in Kharif 2020**

| Challenges faced                                             | Respondents<br>(N=563) | %  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----|
| Increase in prices of seeds                                  | 277                    | 49 |
| Difficulty in accessing seeds                                | 244                    | 43 |
| Difficulty in accessing fertilizers and pesticides           | 183                    | 33 |
| Increase in prices of fertilizers and pesticides             | 173                    | 31 |
| Did not get seeds in time                                    | 156                    | 28 |
| Labour available but at higher cost                          | 93                     | 17 |
| Difficulties in accessing credit                             | 73                     | 13 |
| Difficulties in borrowing seeds, fertilizers, etc. on credit | 71                     | 13 |
| No labour available                                          | 67                     | 12 |
| Others                                                       | 53                     | 9  |

With reference to sourcing agricultural inputs, 27% of the respondents said they sourced from private traders, while 16% said they sourced from self-help groups. About 13% said that they preserved seeds (See table 14)

It is of significance to note that governments did not have a strong role to play when it came to the procurement of seeds and other associated inputs. About 97 (17%) women said they were eligible for an agriculture scheme during Kharif, but the rest didn't receive any assistance.

**Table 14: Source of inputs**

| Source of Inputs         | Respondents<br>(N=563) | %  |
|--------------------------|------------------------|----|
| Private Traders          | 152                    | 27 |
| SHG                      | 91                     | 16 |
| Home-made natural inputs | 89                     | 16 |
| Preserved seeds          | 71                     | 13 |
| Co-operative             | 52                     | 9  |
| NGOs                     | 45                     | 8  |
| Gram Sevak               | 37                     | 7  |
| Agricultural University  | 25                     | 4  |
| FPO                      | 20                     | 4  |
| Agro                     | 17                     | 3  |
| KVK                      | 15                     | 3  |
| ATMA                     | 13                     | 2  |
| Other                    | 12                     | 2  |

Given the difficulties faced by them during the lockdown, women farmers were revisiting their cropping patterns. Scarcity of food during lockdown led to women increasing the area of cultivation under food crops. Grains and cereals are grown by a majority of the households and in this season, 32% responded that they would increase the area under food crops. There were also 27 % who responded saying they would increase the area under cash crops. This underscores the need for food grains and cash incomes, both that were in shortage during the pandemic.

Availability of labour for hire was cited as a significant constraint and this was reflected in the response of 17 % respondents who said they would hire less labour and 11 who said they will not hire any labour at all (See table 15).

## Harvesting produce

Given that several of them had faced constraints in harvesting Kharif and Rabi crops (2019-20), women said that they were concerned about the harvest of the Kharif of 2020 as well. The previous season did not fetch them adequate income and most of them were cash strapped, so they were concerned about hiring wage labour or machinery for harvesting their produce.

**Table 15: Plans for kharif 2020**

| Plans for Kharif                                                                         | Respondents<br>(N=563) | %  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----|
| Will cultivate more food crops                                                           | 179                    | 32 |
| Will cultivate more cash crops                                                           | 153                    | 27 |
| Grow more fodder crops                                                                   | 106                    | 19 |
| Increase in area of cultivation                                                          | 123                    | 22 |
| More members of the family will engage in agriculture activities this Kharif than normal | 106                    | 19 |
| Will hire less laborers                                                                  | 94                     | 17 |
| Will not hire laborers                                                                   | 61                     | 11 |
| Use less/no chemical inputs                                                              | 88                     | 16 |
| Use of more chemical inputs                                                              | 48                     | 9  |
| Will use less machinery                                                                  | 36                     | 6  |
| Will use more machinery                                                                  | 33                     | 6  |
| Others                                                                                   | 36                     | 6  |

Of the 563 cultivators who reported for this season, 333 (59%) said they would have to pay higher wages to the labourers in order to get the work done, while 271 (48 %) said they would find it difficult to arrange for labourers. Increased cost of machinery was also reported as an important concern by 42% of the respondents (See table 16).

**Table 16: Anticipated difficulties in the next season (N=563)**

| Difficulties                            | Respondents<br>(N=563) | %  |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------|----|
| Higher wages may need to be paid        | 333                    | 59 |
| Labour will not be easy to arrange for  | 271                    | 48 |
| Expenses on Machinery may will increase | 237                    | 42 |
| Unable to harvest due to restrictions   | 141                    | 25 |
| Others                                  | 76                     | 13 |

## Marketing of produce

Women were also concerned about marketing their produce. Their concerns were related to

storage, transportation, prices, new norms related to restrictions on entry and exit from the village; police violence; delays at the APMCs or government procurement centres. All of these reasons would contribute to the damage of the produce and hence poor price realisation.

In conclusion, we could say that as cultivators, women faced challenges at multiple levels from sourcing agricultural inputs to engaging labour for harvesting and finally for selling their produce. However, what is important to highlight here is that the government failed in extending any meaningful support to this section of the farmers. As seen earlier, majority of the women were not beneficiaries of the cash transfer scheme of PM Kisan, so they could not benefit from the advance amounts disbursed under the relief measures announced by the Prime Minister as part of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojna (PMJKY). They also did not receive any support for agricultural inputs during the Kharif season. Most of them had to depend on local private traders or the SHGs for credit and agricultural inputs.



### 3.3 Agricultural labourers

#### Background of agricultural labourers

As mentioned earlier of the total 930 respondents, 270 (29.03%) are engaged as Agricultural Labourers. Among these 68.5% belong to households that do not own any land and 15.6% to households owning between 0-3 acres of land, 7.8% own between 3-5 acres of land and 5.6% own 5-10 acres of land (See table 17).

**Table 17: Land ownership among agricultural labourers**

| Ownership      | Respondents | %          |
|----------------|-------------|------------|
| Landless       | 185         | 69         |
| 1-3acres       | 42          | 16         |
| 3-5 acres      | 21          | 8          |
| 5-10acres      | 15          | 6          |
| 10-25 acres    | 4           | 2          |
| Above 25 acres | 3           | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>270</b>  | <b>100</b> |

Women have reported difficulties in finding work for themselves in the lockdown situation. They also reported regarding change in the patterns of agricultural work, where mobility being restricted the cultivators would prefer family members to work on the farms. Most of the respondents who were looking for work were unable to find work and had to work for lesser wages. The reasons that were cited were with reference to the lockdown where the families of cultivators could not pay for agricultural labourers. The lockdown disrupted the movement of labourers, as a result of which it was not possible for them to go outside the village to find work.

Given this brief background we shall see the impacts on agricultural labourers during the

lockdown and the challenges that the lockdown posed for the agricultural season of 2020.

#### Problems during lockdown

The lockdown was announced in March 2020 at a time when harvesting of rabi (winter) crops was either going on or had just been

completed. Women reported the difficulties they faced as a result of the lockdown which included looking for work for themselves and negotiating for fair wages. They also anticipated challenges in finding work and decent wages in the upcoming agricultural season.

In the earlier section, we discussed the difficulties faced by the cultivators in hiring labourers, there were discussions that because of the unavailability of the transport, and restriction on mobility the cost for agricultural labourers had increased which posed challenges for harvesting and marketing of produce.

#### Reduction of work during lockdown

The respondents reported a reduction in work from the earlier season (Rabi 2019) to the current one (Kharif 2020). Of the 270 respondents who depend on agricultural wage work, 65.1% reported that they experienced a reduction in employment during the lockdown. About 49% said that this reduction was due to the lockdown after which all work came to a halt. Among those who reported reduction in availability of work 36% reported that people from the farming families themselves completed the work; 21% reported that farmers too did not have the cash to pay and hence did not engage labour (See table 18).

**Table 18: Reduction in availability of work**

| Reasons for reduced work days                              | Respondents | %  |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----|
| The lockdown shut down labour                              | 133         | 49 |
| People from farming families completed the work themselves | 98          | 36 |
| Farmers could not be paid due to lack of money             | 57          | 21 |
| It was not possible to go outside the village for labour   | 58          | 22 |
| The farming activities in the village were over            | 20          | 7  |

Of the 270 agricultural wage labourers, 237 responded to the questions regarding availability of days of work and wages. Table 19 shows a comparison of availability of work days in the pre-covid season and during the lockdown. In the pre-covid season of the 237 who reported 58 (25%) reported that no work was available during the lockdown while 69% responded that they received work for less than 50 days. During the lockdown this was about 19.4 and 70% respectively. This does indicate a very significant change from the pre-covid situation (See table 19)

Table 20 gives us a picture of the wages that were received before and during the lockdown. About 21% reported that they received no wages during the lockdown as against 15% who said they received no wages prior to the lockdown. Like availability of work, pre lockdown and lockdown period do not seem to indicate any significant differences. This

is also indicative of the overall lack of local employment opportunities in the villages for women.

In conclusion we could say that agricultural labourers faced challenges in finding work due to multiple reasons and this had an impact on the availability of food and cash in their hands.

### 3.4 Livestock Rearing

#### Background of Livestock Rearers

Livestock is a major and assured source of income for farming communities. As mentioned earlier, of the total 930 respondents, 372 (40%) are engaged in livestock rearing. These respondents owned multiple categories of livestock like buffaloes, cattle, sheep etc. Majority of the respondents owned buffaloes (90%); about 52% had cattle and 14% owned chicken (See table 21).

**Table 19: Availability of work days pre-covid and during lockdown**

| Days of available work | Pre-covid   |            | Lockdown    |            |
|------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|                        | Respondents | %          | Respondents | %          |
| No work                | 58          | 25         | 46          | 19         |
| Less than 50           | 164         | 70         | 166         | 70         |
| 50-100                 | 9           | 4          | 1           | 0.4        |
| 100-150                | 2           | 1          | 0           | 0          |
| 150-200                | 1           | 0.4        | 2           | 2          |
| above 200              | 3           | 1          | 2           | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>237</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>237</b>  | <b>100</b> |

**Table 20: Wage rates for Rabi harvest work in 2019 and during lockdown Rabi 2020**

| Wage Rates    | Wages during Rabi harvest 2019 |            | Wages during lockdown Rabi 2020 |            |
|---------------|--------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|------------|
|               | Respondents                    | %          | Respondents                     | %          |
| above Rs 300  | 15                             | 6          | 14                              | 6          |
| Rs 200-Rs 300 | 58                             | 25         | 62                              | 26         |
| Rs 100-Rs 200 | 117                            | 49         | 105                             | 44         |
| Less than 100 | 10                             | 4          | 6                               | 3          |
| No wages      | 37                             | 16         | 50                              | 21         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>237</b>                     | <b>100</b> | <b>237</b>                      | <b>100</b> |

**Table 21: Category of livestock owned**

| Category of Livestock | Responses | %  |
|-----------------------|-----------|----|
| Cattle                | 193       | 52 |
| Buffalo               | 335       | 49 |
| Sheep                 | 20        | 3  |
| Pig                   | 38        | 6  |
| Chicken               | 52        | 8  |
| Camel                 | 1         | -  |
| Duck                  | 14        | 2  |
| Other                 | 25        | 4  |
| None of the above     | 2         | -  |

### Problems during the lockdown

Livelihoods of the livestock community were severely hampered during the pandemic. Non availability of fodder, inadequate health services and absence of a seamless undisrupted market chain, led to disruptions in the livelihoods of livestock workers. We discuss the findings below

### Access to fodder/feed and health services

One of the major impacts of the lockdown of March 2020 was the restriction on mobility which meant that the livestock rearing community could not take the cattle out for grazing. About 34% respondents reported difficulty in taking their cattle to grazing lands while 40% reported inability to access feed or fodder (See table 22).

During the lockdown 20% respondents said that their livestock faced health issues (Table 23). Among those about 12% of the livestock rearers reported that veterinary services were not available and therefore they could not treat their animals.

Moreover, transport was unavailable so animals could not be ferried to block or district places for treatment. Several tried home remedies in some other animals had to be left astray while in some other cases the animals died due to lack of treatment that was available during that time (Table 24).

**Table 22: Challenges faced during the pandemic**

| Challenges Faced                                                 | Respondents | %  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----|
| Inability to access grazing land                                 | 127         | 34 |
| Inability to access feed for your livestock                      | 146         | 40 |
| High prices of feed for livestock in the market                  | 141         | 38 |
| Inability to sell the products like milk/meat/eggs in the market | 77          | 21 |
| Forced to sell the produce at a much lower price than usual      | 95          | 26 |
| Inability to access veterinary services for your livestock       | 46          | 12 |
| No market available for value added products like ghee           | 62          | 17 |
| Lack of mobility to reach chilling facility or storage facility  | 23          | 6  |
| Stigma in villagers/other people that they (pastorals and        | 27          | 7  |

**Table 23: Illnesses faced by livestock during lockdown**

| Illness during lockdown | Respondents | %  |
|-------------------------|-------------|----|
| Yes                     | 76          | 23 |
| No                      | 259         | 67 |

**Table 24: Methods of coping with health issues of livestock during lockdown**

| Methods of coping                       | Respondents | %  |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------|----|
| Home remedies                           | 59          | 78 |
| Pashu Dai                               | 11          | 15 |
| Took to the Veterinary despite lockdown | 22          | 29 |
| Had to put the animal down              | 5           | 7  |
| Others                                  | 9           | 12 |



Lack of planning on the part of the government, especially for cases of emergencies, largely affected the rearing, maintenance, and sale of the livestock. There were certain variations that were seen across states, in terms of the sale of the produce during the period of the lockdown.

## Marketing of produce

While agriculture and allied activities were not included in the lockdown, most agriculturists faced difficulties in marketing their produce.

Access to markets was restricted and 20.8% of the respondents said they found it difficult to sell their produce of meat, eggs and milk or had to sell it at a very low price. This was because the demand had lowered, and market spaces too were not available. These difficulties were reported by 25% of the respondents. Lack of storage facilities meant that produce had to be disposed of at the earliest.

Of those who sold the produce, 76% said they had to sell the produce within the village and a few others reported selling it in nearby local markets (See table 25). However, respondents also said that they had to consume it themselves or distribute it to the neighbours.

**Table 25: Place of sale of livestock**

| Place of Sale      | Respondents<br>(N=147) | %  |
|--------------------|------------------------|----|
| Respondents        | Percentage             |    |
| Local Market       | 41                     | 28 |
| Nearest town       | 35                     | 24 |
| Within the village | 113                    | 77 |
| Others             | 6                      | 4  |

Respondents reported that livestock was raised for multiple purposes. Domestic consumption, farm related activities and for sale of meat, milk, eggs etc were the reasons cited by respondents. About 62% respondents said that livestock rearing was done for domestic purposes; 26 reported uses in farm related activities; 63% reported sale of milk while 10% and 6% were for sale of meat and eggs respectively. About 34% said they have raised it for direct sale of animals (Table 26).

**Table 26: Use of livestock**

| Uses of Livestock       | Respondents | %  |
|-------------------------|-------------|----|
| Domestic consumption    | 232         | 63 |
| Farm related activities | 99          | 27 |
| Sale of meat            | 36          | 10 |
| Sale of eggs            | 22          | 6  |
| Sale of milk            | 233         | 63 |
| Sale of livestock       | 128         | 35 |

During the pandemic about 30% respondents said that they had to distribute their produce in the neighbourhood to make sure it was not wasted while 30% said that a large part of the produce was consumed by the family members (Table 27).

**Table 27: Measures taken when produce could not be sold**

| Methods used to cope                   | Respondents | %  |
|----------------------------------------|-------------|----|
| Had to let it go to waste              | 17          | 5  |
| Shared it in the neighbourhood         | 110         | 30 |
| Value addition for future storage      | 55          | 15 |
| Consumed by family members and animals | 109         | 29 |
| Other                                  | 13          | 4  |

Variations across states were reported with Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh seeing more sales in the APMC as compared with some other states like Uttarakhand for example.

## Income losses

As we have seen, many of them had to either consume the produce themselves, sell it at low prices in the villages or distribute it among neighbours to avoid wastage. Further, non-availability of fodder and health services for their animals also lowered the production in the latter part of the first wave, when restrictions to mobility were being lifted. This has meant severe income losses to them. The income generated during the months of March, April, May 2020 as reported was very low. As seen

in table 28 almost 26% said they received no income during the lockdown months and 30% said that the income they received during the lockdown months was only between Rs. 1000-5000 (Table 28).

**Table 28: Income during Lockdown months**

| Income          | Respondents | %          |
|-----------------|-------------|------------|
| Nil             | 83          | 26         |
| Below 1000      | 14          | 4          |
| 1000-5000       | 94          | 30         |
| 6000-10000      | 40          | 13         |
| 11000-20000     | 35          | 11         |
| 20000-30000     | 24          | 8          |
| 31000-40000     | 13          | 4          |
| 40000 and above | 14          | 4          |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>317</b>  | <b>100</b> |

Among the respondents 87% did not have any insurance for their animals and hence the losses hit them very hard (Table 29).

**Table 29: Insurance for the animals**

| Insurance | Respondents | %  |
|-----------|-------------|----|
| Yes       | 43          | 13 |
| No        | 292         | 87 |

## Absence of support from the government

The support received from various organisations was also limited, the Government promises of ensuring smooth functioning during the period of the lockdown were largely missing. There was some assistance given by the Government in terms of creating passes for entry and exit from the villages however that seemed to be very variable. Only 60 respondents mentioned that they received help from the government in terms of accessing passes, 65 respondents mentioned cooperatives helping them access the passes in order to sell their produce, 89 respondents mentioned others who also helped them in the process. The Government provided support in terms of helping access the social security scheme, along with the marketing of milk and in matters of issuing passes in order to aid the process of sale, but that too with very limited reach (Table 30).

Overall, the one major income support that farmers saw in livestock too was lost.

**Table 30: Support received during the lockdown (Figures in parentheses are %)**

| Support received                                                                                       | Government Sources | Ngo Support | Cooperative Support | Other Sources |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Getting feed/fodder from the market                                                                    | 28<br>(6%)         | 78<br>(17%) | 44<br>(10%)         | 34<br>(8%)    |
| Veterinary support in case of urgent need                                                              | 35<br>(8%)         | 37<br>(8%)  | 45<br>(10%)         | 67<br>(16%)   |
| Support in marketing of milk                                                                           | 64<br>(14%)        | 64<br>(14%) | 34<br>(7%)          | 22<br>(5%)    |
| Transportation facility                                                                                | 55<br>(12%)        | 67<br>(15%) | 87<br>(19%)         | 45<br>(11%)   |
| Issue of pass for going to market for sale of produce                                                  | 60<br>(13%)        | 33<br>(7%)  | 65<br>(14%)         | 89<br>(22%)   |
| Pass to move with livestock                                                                            | 31<br>(7%)         | 24<br>(5%)  | 22<br>(5%)          | 42<br>(10%)   |
| Benefit from Social Security Schemes                                                                   | 74<br>(16%)        | 56<br>(12%) | 45<br>(10%)         | 55<br>(13%)   |
| Benefit from Any special scheme under the National Livestock Mission by the government during lockdown | 54<br>(12%)        | 32<br>(7%)  | 32<br>(7%)          | 8<br>(2%)     |
| Benefit from Livelihoods support scheme                                                                | 22<br>(5%)         | 11<br>(2%)  | 56<br>(12%)         | 6<br>(2%)     |
| Cash transfers                                                                                         | 45<br>(10%)        | 56<br>(12%) | 31<br>(7%)          | 43<br>(11%)   |

## 3.5 Forest workers

### Background of the forest workers

There were a total of 43 respondents out of 930 respondents who were involved in the collection of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP). The NTFP collectors belonged to the states of Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. Majority of the NTFP Collectors belonged to the Social Category of Scheduled Tribes (35%) followed by the OBCs (28%) Scheduled Caste (16%) and General (16%) and to the Denotified Tribes (5%) (Table 31).

**Table 31: Social Categories of NTFP Collectors**

| Social Categories      | Respondents | %          |
|------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Scheduled Tribes       | 15          | 35         |
| De Notified Tribes     | 2           | 5          |
| Other Backward Classes | 12          | 28         |
| Scheduled Caste        | 7           | 16         |
| General                | 7           | 16         |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>43</b>   | <b>100</b> |

### Impact of the Lockdown on the NTFP Collectors

The declaration of the lockdown during the month of March brought about a halt in the livelihood of the NTFP Collectors, there were 44.19% of the respondents who were directly affected by the pandemic.

### Reduction in income

There was a reduction of income for NTFP Collectors between 2019 and 2020, 74% of the respondents reported a reduction in their income (Table 32).

Their income was impacted because they were unable to collect from the forests (79%) of the respondents), 26% said that they were able to collect from the forest, but they were unable to sell their collections. The lockdown largely impacted the demand for their collection- 21% of the respondents had to sell their forest

produce at a price lower than what they would usually sell at.

**Table 32: Change in Income**

| Change in Income | Respondents |            |
|------------------|-------------|------------|
| Decrease         | 32          | 74         |
| Increase         | 6           | 14         |
| No Change        | 5           | 12         |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>43</b>   | <b>100</b> |

### Forcible evictions during lockdown

There were a number of difficulties experienced in accessing the forest. Almost 70% of the women said that they faced difficulties in collecting forest produce due to the presence of the forest officials.

**Table 33: Difficulties posed by Forest Department**

| Difficulties faced | Responses | %          |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes                | 30        | 70         |
| No                 | 13        | 30         |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>43</b> | <b>100</b> |

The forest department did not allow them to access the forest, and collect firewood from there, they also demanded to see passes in order to access the forest. Among the 30 who said they faced difficulties 7 said they faced threats of eviction during the period of the lockdown, causing distress for the collectors (Table 34). One of the respondents reported that they were evicted out of their lands.

**Table 34: Threats of eviction faced by the NTFP Collectors**

| Threat of Eviction | Respondents | %          |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| No                 | 36          | 84         |
| Yes                | 7           | 16         |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>43</b>   | <b>100</b> |

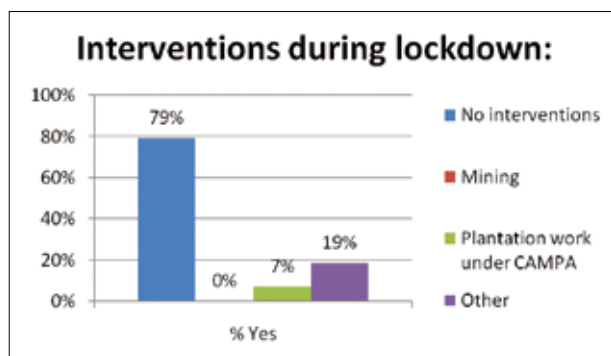
Asked whether there were any interventions such as mining or such other encroachments in forests during the lockdown, majority (79%) reported that there were no such interventions



while 7% said that plantation under CAMPA was going on at the time (Figure 1).

Only 16.28% of the respondents received MNREGA work in the forest lands, an insignificant contribution in terms of social security being provided.

**Figure 1: Interventions during lockdown**



### Government support

There were no initiatives from the government side in order to mitigate the impact of the lockdown on the lives of the NTFP collectors. The only actions taken by the government were to evict the forest dweller when they went to collect food, fodder and other forest produce for themselves or for sale in the markets. In very few instances, women reported getting access to passes to enter the forests.

Gram Sabhas are a very important democratic process which is particularly important among the forest dwellers, as several decisions related to sale and auctions of the forest produce from community forests get decided in these. Governments across the country brought these gram sabhas to a halt and thus several important decisions regarding auctions of produce could not take place in this period as a result of which people lost out on their income.

### 3.6 Fishery

As mentioned earlier, of the total 930 respondents, 31 respondents are engaged in fishery. There were respondents across the states of Assam, Bihar, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Gujarat.

As is seen in table 35, majority of the women were engaged in inland fishing (65%) in comparison to marine fishing (35%).

The majority i.e., 84% usually sell their produce in the domestic market and 16% sell their produce in the local markets outside of their villages.

**Table 35: Type of fishing**

| Type         | Respondents | %          |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| Inland       | 20          | 65         |
| Marine       | 11          | 35         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>31</b>   | <b>100</b> |

### Impacts of the lockdown

Like others, the lockdown announced in March 2020, also affected those engaged in the fisheries sector. Our findings show that women suffered considerable monetary loss during that period due to decrease in demand for their produce, lack of transportation and storage facilities that affected the marketing of produce and the price realisation.

During the lockdown, even local and domestic markets were closed initially, and transportation came to a grinding halt. As a result of this, women could not sell their produce.

Women reported an average seasonal income of Rs. 11732 in the previous year. In the season in 2020, from March to June 2020 the income had declined to Rs 4571/.

Women reported an average loss of income of about Rs. 10,000 in the months from March to August 2020.

Income losses meant that borrowing increased and therefore indebtedness as well. As many as 45% had to take loans from various sources during this period to meet daily expenses. Recovery from losses in livelihood activity would take a long time (Table 36).

**Table 36: Credit Requirement during lockdown**

| Requirement for Credit | Respondents | %          |
|------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Yes                    | 14          | 45.16      |
| No                     | 17          | 55         |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>31</b>   | <b>100</b> |

At a time, such as the present pandemic, women expected support from government and other non-government agencies. Government support was very negligible and limited to granting permission to access the coast for a short period. In some cases, financial aid was provided by the government and facilities to store the catch or link it to markets for sale of small-scale fisheries.

**Table 37: Government support received during lockdown**

| Government support                                                | Respondents | %  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----|
| Permission to access the coast for a certain period               | 8           | 26 |
| Financial Aid                                                     | 7           | 23 |
| Storage facilities                                                | 3           | 10 |
| Linking local catch with market for sale of small-scale fisheries | 2           | 7  |

The new season of Kharif and Rabi 2020 was thus seen as challenging by all of them. About 48% said that people will not buy fish and demand will continue to go down due to fear of the disease. About 29% said that there will be labour shortage for catching the produce and hence affect the overall production. Access to fish feed, marketing, transportation, and a fair price remained as worries for a majority of them (Table 38).

**Table 38: Challenges for the upcoming season**

| Pressing challenges in the coming seasons                 | Respondents | %  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----|
| Fear of disease people will not buy                       | 15          | 48 |
| Demand will fall                                          | 12          | 39 |
| Labour scarcity                                           | 9           | 29 |
| Fair price                                                | 7           | 23 |
| Access to fish seed will be affected                      | 5           | 16 |
| Lack of storage facilities                                | 5           | 16 |
| Transportation issues - lack of trucks and/or other means | 3           | 10 |

### 3.7 Loans and Liabilities

A comparison of loans taken in the pre-lockdown phase with the lockdown phase does not show a very wide difference. In 2019, about 225 respondents (24%) took loans from various sources while this figure was 204 (22%) in the lockdown period. (Table 39).

**Table 39: Loans taken**

| Loan taken   | Pre-lockdown | Lockdown     |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Yes          | 225<br>(24%) | 204<br>(22%) |
| No           | 705<br>(76%) | 726<br>(78%) |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>930</b>   | <b>930</b>   |

Only 37% of the respondents were able to fully repay their loans taken in 2019. However, 36% of the respondents were not able to repay their loan at all, while 27% were able to partially repay their loan (Table 40).

**Table 40: Repayment of loans taken pre-lockdown**

| Repayment of loans | Respondents (N=225) | %          |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Yes                | 83                  | 37         |
| No                 | 81                  | 36         |
| Partially          | 61                  | 27         |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>225</b>          | <b>100</b> |

However, if we look at the data on source of loans, we see an important shift from banks to SHGs. In the pre-lockdown phase in 2019 we see that 44% of the respondents took loans from banks and 37% from SHGs. During lockdown, this trend reversed with 43% of the respondents turning to SHGs for credit and only 30% took a new loan from a bank. This could be explained by the fact that many were not able to repay loans taken from the banks and hence had to rely on informal sources of credit (Table 41)

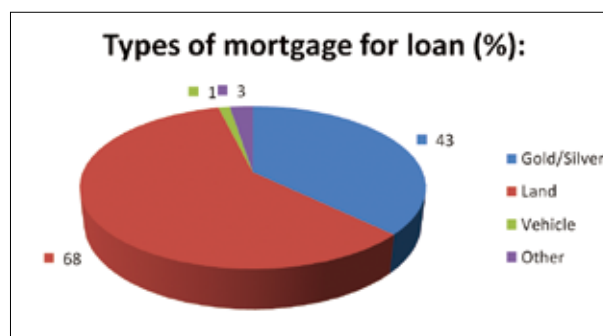
It is important to note here that SHGs stepped in at a time when institutional loans were not available to women.

Of the respondents that had taken out a loan in 2019, 68% mortgaged something or the other (Table 42).

Around 68% of them had to mortgage their land, while 43% their gold or silver (Figure 2).

**Table 42: Mortgaging for the Loan**

| Mortgaged for Loan | Respondents | %          |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| Yes                | 153         | 68         |
| No                 | 72          | 32         |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>225</b>  | <b>100</b> |

**Figure 2: Types of Mortgage**

There were multiple reasons for taking loan during the lockdown period, livelihood being most affected during the period, 46% of the respondents agreed that they had taken out loans in order to buy inputs for their livelihood. 37% of the respondents had to take loan in order to meet household expenses and 34% of the respondents agreed that it was to buy essentials (Table 43).

**Table 41: Source of loans before and during the lockdown**

| Sources of credit                              | Pre-lockdown                  |    | Lockdown                      |    |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|----|
|                                                | Number of respondents (N=225) | %  | Number of respondents (N=204) | %  |
| Bank                                           | 100                           | 44 | 61                            | 30 |
| Credit cooperative                             | 27                            | 12 | 15                            | 7  |
| SHG                                            | 83                            | 37 | 87                            | 43 |
| Microfinance                                   | 8                             | 4  | 10                            | 5  |
| Moneylender                                    | 17                            | 8  | 29                            | 14 |
| Relatives                                      | 17                            | 8  | 41                            | 20 |
| Purchase of seeds / fertilizers etc. on credit | 9                             | 4  | --                            | -- |
| Other                                          | 2                             | 1  | -                             | -  |



**Table 43: Reasons for loans during lockdown**

| Reasons for loans during lockdown                            | Number of respondents (N=204) | %  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----|
| Inputs for livelihood (for Kharif, equipment, raw materials) | 93                            | 46 |
| To buy essentials                                            | 69                            | 34 |
| To repay an existing loan                                    | 39                            | 19 |
| Food - consumption                                           | 35                            | 17 |
| Other Household expenses                                     | 75                            | 37 |
| Illness                                                      | 14                            | 7  |
| Transportation back for a migrant from the family            | 1                             | -  |
| Social Activity                                              | 8                             | 4  |
| Other                                                        | 8                             | 4  |

Across the states and across livelihood activities we see that women's livelihoods have been disrupted and the road to recovery may be a long and arduous one.



*Woman farmer collecting brinjal seeds for next sowing season in Kota, Rajasthan*







*Woman farmer in Dholpur, Rajasthan*



*Women farmers in Pindwara, Rajasthan*



*Women farmers at a kitchen garden in Baran, Rajasthan*



## Chapter 4

# Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana

On 26 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced a 1.70 lakh crore package called Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) to provide relief to the poor during the lockdown.

Among the various relief measures, cash transfers were announced for various categories of poor women. Women Jandhan account holders were to receive Rs. 500/month for three months from April-June 2020, an ex-gratia amount of Rs. 1000 was to be deposited into the accounts of those receiving widow, old age, or disabilities pensions; beneficiaries of the Ujjwala gas scheme were to receive free cylinders for 3 months, wages for MNREGA were to increase by Rs. 20/- and the PM Kisan Sanman beneficiaries to receive an advance of Rs. 2000/- for April against their entitlement. The scheme also announced that five kg of free rice and one kg of tur dal/per person would be distributed under the PDS for certain categories of ration card holders for a period of two months initially and this was extended until November 2020 later.

One of the objectives of the study was to see the extent of outreach of the PMGKY among the small and marginal women farmers who formed a part of this study. We discuss the findings in this chapter.

### 4.1 Food Security

Before we look at the data on the effectiveness of the PDS and the benefits from the free food grain distribution scheme under PMGKY, let us examine the impact of the lockdown on overall food intake of women.

Among the respondents, 39% women said that they did not have sufficient food grains stored from their produce to sustain them during the lockdown (See Table 1). Around 20% of women said they completely depended on external agencies for their food security, while 21% women said that they were partially dependent (See table 2).

**Table 1: Availability of stored food grains during lockdown**

| Availability of food grains                              | Respondents | %          |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Sufficient food grains available from own stored produce | 565         | 61         |
| Produce from own farms not sufficient                    | 365         | 39         |
| <b>Total</b>                                             | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |

**Table 2: Dependence on external agencies for food security**

| Category                                          | Respondents | %          |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Dependent on external agencies for food           | 183         | 20         |
| Partially dependent on external agencies for food | 195         | 21         |
| Not dependent                                     | 552         | 59         |
| <b>Total</b>                                      | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |

### Skipping meals

However, what was worrying was that 18% women said that they had to skip at least

one meal during lockdown, because they didn't have enough food. Nearly 14% of all the women said they had to forgo meals for at least an entire day and of the 239 single women 21% had to forgo meals for the entire day. (See Table 3).

The reasons cited for this were limited availability of ration coupled with increasing number of family members at home (29%); irregular supply of ration through the PDS (21%); not having a ration card (11%); restrictions on collections of NTFP (7%) or receiving different grains in different months (18%). About 15% said they did not face any major issues (See Table 4).

Women also cited other reasons such as financial constraints in purchasing food, high prices in the open market, not being able to purchase items not included in PDS, inability to travel out of village to buy food, etc.

## Regular ration supply

Let us first examine the distribution of regular ration supply before we look at the PMGKY scheme.

**Table 3: Skipping Meals during lockdown**

| Skipping meals                             | All Respondents |    | Single Women |    |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|----|--------------|----|
|                                            | Respondents     | %  | Respondents  | %  |
| Skipped a single meal during lockdown      | 16              | 18 | 44           | 18 |
| Skipped a whole day's meal during lockdown | 130             | 14 | 50           | 21 |

**Table 4: Problems in securing food during the lockdown**

| Problems in securing food                                                 | Respondents | %   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| Limited amount of ration coupled with increasing number of family members | 270         | 29% |
| Irregular supply of ration through PDS                                    | 193         | 21% |
| Received different ration items during different months                   | 168         | 18% |
| Absence of ration card                                                    | 97          | 11% |
| Restrictions in collecting Minor Forest Produce (MFP)                     | 66          | 7%  |
| Did not face much of a problem                                            | 136         | 15% |

Our data showed that among the 930 respondents, 103 (11%) did not have their names in any ration card and hence were not eligible for access to PDS.

**Table 5: Name included in Ration Card**

|              | Number     | %          |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Yes          | 827        | 89         |
| No           | 103        | 11         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>930</b> | <b>100</b> |

The number of respondents who did have ration cards either in their own names or had their names listed in the family ration cards were 827 (89%). Of these 89% ration card holders, on an average 69% women got regular rations for all four months, while 12% didn't get it at all (Table 6). Many reported that they did not receive the regular ration quota in time.



**Table 6: Months of receiving ration**

| Number of months | Respondents | %          |
|------------------|-------------|------------|
| 0                | 113         | 12         |
| 1                | 55          | 6%         |
| 2                | 63          | 7%         |
| 3                | 61          | 7%         |
| 4                | 638         | 69%        |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |

Overall, we see that food insecurity and hunger was a concern among most of the respondents. What is significant to note here is that 39% reported not having food grains from their produce to sustain themselves during the lockdown. This even though majority of the respondents engaged in cultivation.

## 4.2 Benefits under PMGKY

### Free food grains

Under this special scheme, around 80 crore National Food Security Act 2013 (NFSA) beneficiaries -- covered under both categories of NFSA; Antyodaya Anna Yojana and Priority households were to be provided with free-of-cost food grains (rice/wheat) at a scale of 5 kg per person per month, over and above their regular monthly entitlements under NFSA. Additionally, an announcement of free distribution of one kg of tur dal/person for nutritional intake was made.

As mentioned earlier of the 930 respondents 827 (89%) had ration cards either in their own name or included in the family cards. From among the 827 ration card holders, 89 (11%) respondents, belonged to the **APL without priority category** which was excluded from receiving benefits from the PMGKY free grain distribution scheme. The rest (88%) were eligible to receive free grains.

**Table 7: Type of Ration card**

| Type of Card         | Respondents (N=827) | %          |
|----------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Antyodaya            | 150                 | 18         |
| BPL                  | 404                 | 49         |
| APL with Priority    | 175                 | 21         |
| APL without priority | 89                  | 11         |
| No information       | 9                   | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>827</b>          | <b>100</b> |

Among those who were eligible, 51% of beneficiaries reported receiving the additional free rice/ wheat during the month of March, and 30% of beneficiaries received an additional kilogram of pulses. In the month of April, 74% of the beneficiaries received the additional rice and 53% beneficiaries received additional pulses. The month of May witnessed the highest outreach with 74% beneficiaries receiving the additional rice and 59% beneficiaries receiving the additional pulses (Table 8).

**Table 8: Received the free food grain and pulses**

| Receiving food Grains | 5 Kg wheat/rice |               | 1 Kg pulses |    |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|----|
|                       | Respondents     | % Respondents |             | %  |
| March                 | 369             | 51            | 221         | 30 |
| April                 | 555             | 74            | 394         | 53 |
| May                   | 545             | 74            | 434         | 59 |
| June                  | 453             | 64            | 400         | 56 |

We also asked if food grains were received from sources other than the PDS. To this 88% said they received no support for any food grains apart from the PDS. 12% women reported that they did receive some support for food security during lockdown (Table 9). Of the 115 women who said they received support, 60 got it from the government from other schemes, 50 got it from NGOs, and 10 reported other sources that included political leaders at various levels, and church in 2 instances (Table 10).

**Table 9: Support for food from sources other than PDS**

| PDS support               | Respondents | %          |
|---------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Support received from PDS | 115         | 12         |
| No support from PDS       | 815         | 88         |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |

**Table 10: Sources of Food Support**

| Food Support | Numbers (N=115) | %  |
|--------------|-----------------|----|
| Government   | 60              | 52 |
| NGO          | 50              | 43 |
| Other        | 10              | 9  |

## Widow, Disability and Old age pension

Under this scheme, all the existing beneficiaries of the widow, old age and disabilities pension were to receive an ex-gratia amount of Rs 1000/- in two instalments over the months of April and May 2020.

**Table 11: Eligible for Pension**

| Pension categories         | Eligible for Pensions (numbers) |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Widow pension              | 158                             |
| Old age                    | 47                              |
| Disability                 | 12                              |
| Army pension               | 9                               |
| Retired employees' pension | 11                              |
| Any other pension (detail) | 14                              |

**Table 12: Benefit of pensions under PMGKY**

| Responses | Widow Pension (N=158) |    | Old age (N=47) |    | Disability (N=12) |    |
|-----------|-----------------------|----|----------------|----|-------------------|----|
|           | Respondents           | %  | Respondents    | %  | Respondents       | %  |
| March     | 121                   | 77 | 27             | 58 | 7                 | 58 |
| April     | 125                   | 79 | 25             | 53 | 8                 | 67 |
| May       | 122                   | 77 | 28             | 60 | 7                 | 58 |
| June      | 116                   | 73 | 28             | 60 | 7                 | 58 |

Of the 930 respondents, 188 were widows. Among these widows, 158 (84%) reported that they were listed beneficiaries of the widow pension.

From the period between March to June i.e., when the PMGKY relief measures were announced, about 77% of these listed beneficiaries received said amount.

While most of the respondents received their widow pension on time from March to June, 27% of the beneficiaries did not receive it during the month of June and 23% of the respondents did not receive it during the month of March.

Of those eligible for the old age pension, only 53% received the ex-gratia amount in April 2020 and 59% received it in May 2020. Which means close to 50% did not receive the amounts during the lockdown period.

Of those eligible for the disability pension, 67% received the amount in April 2020 while only 58% received it in May 2020. (Table 12)

Most of the respondents had no clarity as to whether they had received their regular pension amounts, or the ex-gratia amount announced under the PMGKY.

## Jandhan Accounts

Under this scheme, 20 crore women Jan Dhan account holders were to receive an ex-gratia amount of Rs. 500 per month for three months in the period between April-June 2020 into their Jan Dhan accounts.

**Table 13: Jandhan Account**

| Jandhan account                | Respondents (N=930) | %          |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Having Jandhan account         | 419                 | 45         |
| Do not have an account         | 485                 | 52         |
| Have an account but not active | 26                  | 3          |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>930</b>          | <b>100</b> |

The study found that of the 930 respondents who responded to this question, 484 (52%) do not have Jandhan accounts. Of those who do have these accounts 76% reported having received the cash transfer of Rs. 500/- in the Month of April 2020.

### Ujjwala Gas scheme

Under the PMGKY-Ujjwala scheme, PMUY consumers were to get free of cost refills of up to 3 refills for 14.2 kg cylinders and advance Retail Selling Price were to be transferred to the PMUY customer's bank account. The amount can be withdrawn to obtain the refill from the distributor. Thus, the listed existing beneficiaries were to receive free of cost three refills. Subsequently the scheme was changed, and beneficiaries were first expected to purchase the cylinder before any money was transferred to their accounts.

**Table 14: Beneficiary of Ujjwala Gas scheme (PMUY)**

| Benefitted from Ujjwala Gas Scheme | Respondents | %          |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| No                                 | 525         | 56         |
| Yes                                | 405         | 44         |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |

Among our sample, 56% were not listed beneficiaries of the Ujjwala scheme and hence were not eligible to receive the three refills (See table 14). Those who were eligible complained that they had to pay upfront for the cylinders and were only reimbursed later after they showed adequate proof of purchase of cylinders. Thus, the scheme failed to address the hardships that most of the women faced during this period.

### PM Kisan Sanman Nidhi Yojana

Under this scheme, cash transfers are made to farmer households in three instalments of Rs. 2000/- each. The relief measures under the PMGKY did not provide for any additional benefit and only announced a front loading of the Rs. 2000/- instalment.

When it was launched, the scheme was applicable to small and marginal farmer households with a total landholding of 2 ha. In June 2019, the central government expanded the PM Kisan Yojana to all farmer households irrespective of the land size. However, even though majority of the respondents belonged to small and marginal households with less than five acres of land in their name our data showed that only 35% of women were beneficiaries of PM Kisan Sanman scheme. Among those who are listed as beneficiaries i.e., 106 respondents, 79% reported to having received the advance instalment of Rs. 2000/- (Tables 15&16)

**Table 15: Beneficiary of PM Kisan Sanman Nidhi**

| Category                           | Respondents | %   |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| Beneficiary of PM Kisan            | 106         | 35  |
| No                                 | 141         | 46  |
| Don't Know                         | 59          | 19  |
| Total landowners holding 1-5 acres | 306         | 100 |



**Table 16: Benefit received from P M Kisan Samman Nidhi for April**

| Received money for April     | Responses (N=106) | %  |
|------------------------------|-------------------|----|
| Advance benefit received     | 84                | 79 |
| Advance benefit not received | 16                | 15 |
| Don't Know                   | 6                 | 6  |

### 4.3 Access to banks

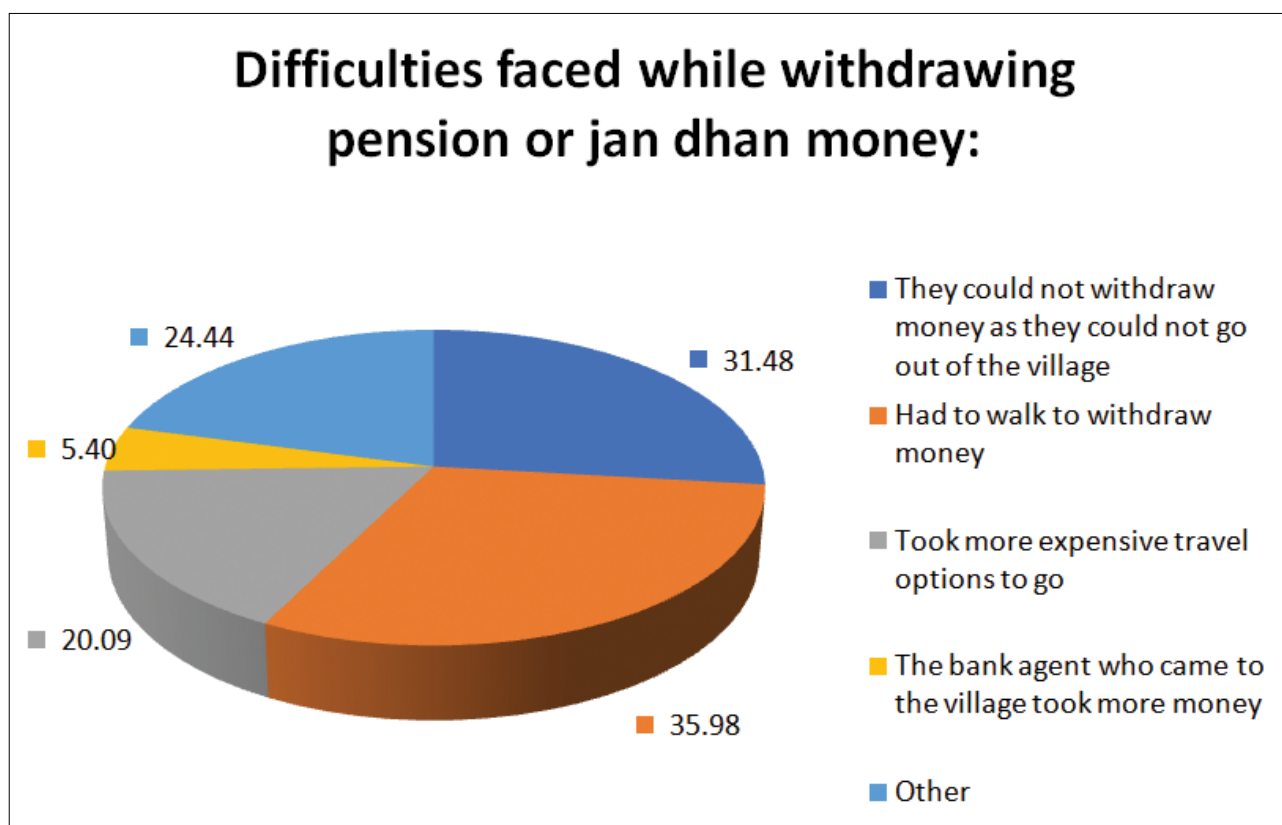
Accessing banks during the lockdown was a daunting task for many of the respondents. Nearly 36% were forced to walk long distances to withdraw their money, while 32% were not able to withdraw any money at all as they could not go out of the village. Around 5% of the respondents had to pay more money to the bank agent who came to their village, while 20% chose to go with more expensive travel options (Figure 1).

### 4.4 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA)

MNREGA is a large-scale public employment programme of the Government of India. It provides a legal guarantee of 100 days of work per household in a year. It has proved to be very beneficial, especially in areas where no other employment opportunities are available.

The employment crisis during the pandemic called for the expansion of MNREGA and increase in the wages. Under the PMGKY, wages were increased by a mere Rs. 20 i.e. from Rs. 182 per day to 202 per day. In the first phase of the lockdown all works had halted including work on NREGA sites. There was thus a growing demand that NREGA workers be compensated for the loss due to halting of work sites. Moreover, there was also a demand that number of NREGA days be increased from the present 100 days to 200 days and that work sites be opened with immediate effect.

**Figure 1: Difficulties in withdrawing money from the bank**



**Table 17: Possessing a Job Card**

| MNREGA Job Card                  | Respondents | %          |
|----------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Name included in MNREGA job card | 512         | 54         |
| Name not included in Job Card    | 417         | 46         |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>930</b>  | <b>100</b> |

However, through our data we find several constraints faced by women during the hard lockdown of the first wave.

Of the 930 respondents, 46% reported that they do not have the required job card in their name. As a result, they do not become eligible for work at NREGA sites. There are no eligibility criteria for issuance of a job card, but due to several reasons, many women still do not have job cards.

Of those who did have job cards, 39% reported that they did not get a single day of work during the lockdown and 17% reported getting around 25-50 days of work during the 4-month period of the lockdown. But the situation was not very different in the pre-covid year either.

**Table 18: Number of MNREGA workdays available during lockdown**

| Number of working days (Post Covid) | Respondents (N=334) | %  |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|----|
| 0                                   | 130                 | 39 |
| Less than 10 days                   | 41                  | 12 |
| 10-25 days                          | 47                  | 14 |
| 25-50 days                          | 57                  | 17 |
| 50-80 days                          | 29                  | 9  |
| 80-100 days                         | 30                  | 9  |
| More than 100 days                  | 0                   | 0  |

Among the works that were started included several watershed works, deepening of ponds, land improvement, construction of wells etc.

About 75% women responded that they were not aware that a demand for work on their own farms too could be made. Women also responded that they always thought that most of the work sites and the nature of the work was unsuitable for women and hence they never demanded for work. Some women also said that payments were not timely, and wages were lower than what they receive elsewhere. Several of them also complained of corrupt practices in the issuance of job cards and also the practice of taking away of the job cards by contractors/supervisors, delayed and low wages, siphoning of the wages by middlemen etc.

As far as following of COVID protocol is concerned, most responded by saying that physical distancing was maintained, soap and sanitisers were made available and regular inspections were done at the work site. However, the fact that majority did not get work and did not have job cards should be a matter of concern for the largest public employment programme of the country.

Overall, we conclude from this section, the failure of the State to respond to the crisis and alleviate the hardships of the women farmers. Most of them were left out of the safety net with no social or economic protection.







***SHG meet at Peerpur village, Bandra block, Muzaffarpur, Bihar***



***Woman farmer from Muzaffarpur  
Bihar***



***Woman  
farmer from  
Muzaffarpur,  
Bihar***



# Key findings, conclusions, and recommendations

A national webinar was organised by MAKAAAM to understand the impacts of the lockdown on women farmers which prompted the need for a study to document impacts and inform policy and groundwork for extending relief. Selection of the respondents was based on the constituencies that MAKAAAM partners across the country work with and an effort to include a cross section of women belonging to different castes, marital status and occupations was made. A mixture of telephonic and in-person interviews were collected through the COLLECT mobile application in the period between August 4-September 10, 2020.

The enquiry covered the impacts on livelihoods, employment, food, and social security; issues of domestic violence and access to the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY).

### 5.1 Key findings and conclusions

The study covered 930 women across 11 states engaged in multiple livelihoods, predominant among them were cultivators, agricultural labourers, and livestock workers. The sample also included fisherfolk and forest workers. Of the total respondents, about 26% were single women; majority of the respondents belonged to the OBC (33.76%) category followed by ST (32.69%); with most coming from small and marginal households. Almost 40% of the respondents had not received any formal education.

The pandemic brought to the fore debates about sanitation, health, and hygiene. Discussions that did not take place in everyday conversations became a part of the everyday life.

While women hesitated to respond to the question of increased **domestic violence**, the reasons for this were evident - a) livelihoods and survival were much more of a priority, and b) violence is part of their everyday lives and they anticipated an aggravation of this when resources were depleted. Very few reported to the police or any other support systems. Violence outside of the homes by police and forest officials was also reported.

**Food security and livelihoods:** Depletion of food and cash, absence of employment and a complete disruption of livelihoods have emerged as the key issues that need immediate attention.

The study showed that 18% women had to skip at least one meal during lockdown, because they didn't have enough food and 14% said they had to forgo meals for at least an entire day. The women reported skipping their meals in the period between April to June 2020, because food was not available through the PDS or because food prices in the open market had skyrocketed or simply because they had no resources to purchase any food. Hunger and **food insecurity** were thus important issues that emerged from the study.

It is ironical that while 65% of our sample was engaged in cultivation 39% said that they did not have sufficient food grains stored from their produce to sustain them during the lockdown. Around 20% of women said they completely depended on external agencies for their food security.

Work had halted due to the lockdown. **Cultivators** could not hire labour to harvest their produce due to increased wage rates and

non-availability of labour in some states and in others, where migrants had returned, family labour was utilised for harvesting and other activities, thereby leaving those dependent on wage labour without work. It is interesting to note that 36% of the respondents reported that they would increase the area under food grains. In a normal year about 74% cultivators reported that they grow food grains and cereals, but the food crisis has perhaps prompted as many as 86% cultivators to grow food crops in Kharif of 2020. This could well be because food security was an important concern for the families, who not only had to feed more members who had returned from the cities, but also because they experienced the market closures and increase in prices of food grains in the open market.

Those dependent on agricultural wage labour, reported reduction in work days and also lowering of wages during the lockdown.

**Livestock** workers reported difficulties in accessing fodder due to restrictions on mobility, increased prices of feed, loss of sales of their produce as transportation and markets were closed, inability to access veterinary services which led to loss of livestock, inability to sell eggs, meat, milk due to certain rumours of these being carriers of the virus, saturation of value-added products like ghee, butter etc. **Fish workers** too faced losses due to the decrease in demand for fish and increased prices of feed and **forest workers** too could not collect forest produce due to restrictions imposed for movement in the forest. Those who did harvest their produce could not market it or had to sell at very low rates. A few of them also reported that they were evicted by the forest department.

Overall, we see that livelihoods were disrupted and all of them reported that they anticipated several challenges in the upcoming agricultural season of Kharif 2020. Many of them could not repay older loans and hence would not be eligible for newer ones and thus had to shift from formal institutional borrowing to

informal sources such as SHGs or local money lender for this season. Investing in inputs for their livelihoods thus seemed a challenge, while those dependent on agricultural wage work anticipated a very delayed entry into employment.

**PMGKY:** However, what was most disconcerting was the **failure of the public systems** and the large-scale relief measures announced under the PMGKY.

Two findings emerged from this section a) inadequacy of the relief measures b) non eligibility of women farmers to social and economic protection measures under which relief was announced.

Food distribution was restricted to only official ration card holders which means 12% of our respondents had to entirely depend on markets or credit. The free rice and dal distribution was further restricted to beneficiaries under Antyodaya and priority card lists, leaving 10% of our respondents outside the net. PM Kisan was only an advance allocation and benefitted again only those who were listed beneficiaries. Benefits under Ujjwala, old age, widow and disability pension and cash transfers for Jandhan account holders were extended to only existing beneficiaries which was only 50% of the total respondents. MNREGA, which is the largest public employment programme in India also did not benefit women. As many as 45% did not have the job cards which are required for demanding work under MNREGA and 38% of those who did have the cards did not get a single day of work during the lockdown.

Thus, to conclude, several of the respondents were left outside of the safety net announced by the Government under the PMGKY and those who were included, reported that the relief was very inadequate.

Given these set of findings, MAKAAAM had the following recommendations to make to the government:

## 5.2 Recommendations

### Short-term to Medium term

The time frame for short term measures is considered as six months or until the end of the year given that the situation is dynamic and that the pandemic and partial lockdowns are likely to continue until the end of the year.

### Food and nutritional security and cash transfers

1. Universalise and expand PDS with immediate effect for the next six months. Expand it to include nutritious food like, dals, pulses, oil, sugar and potatoes and onions for example.
2. Ensure ration shops are functional with adequate supplies, and include local produce
3. Promote kitchen gardens and localised farmer centric producer markets.
4. To address women's increased workload, strengthen community kitchens through seed grants to women's groups and ensure income for women collective to cook food at anganwadis for community feeding
5. Unconditional transfer of Rs 10,000 in the name of women for all the poor rural households with emphasis on single women and female headed households for at least six months. The 500/- under Jandhan was inadequate and outreach was poor as Jandhan accounts not held by several women as pointed through a recent study of MAKAAAM
6. Transfer NREGS wages for the lost 25-30 days at minimum wages to all NREGS active workers.
7. Improve bank access through bank mitras or correspondents

### Employment and NREGS

1. Ensure wages for work in such circumstances of containment and restricted mobility, especially for marginal landless farmers since scheme provides for compensation at times when work is not given.
2. Additional 100 days to NREGA to compensate for the lost days
3. Issuance of job cards on a priority basis to those women who do not have them.
4. Ensure that all NREGS works start with immediate effect. Prioritise soil and water conservation works on individual farms or those that help build assets for women.
5. Identify common lands such as forests, village commons and ensure that all landless women are provided NREGS works on these lands.
6. Enumerate all the returning migrants, maintain a database, do skill mapping, skill upgradation and create employment programs with the coordination from panchayat level upwards to the district and state level.

### Strengthening land rights

1. Ensure recognition of claims to community forest rights before any land diversion
2. Ensure land banks cater to needs of most marginalized before any land is allocated to infra projects so people's access to resources is improved.
3. Improved implementation of succession laws to strengthen land rights for women
4. Ensure redistribution of public lands in the name of women and guarantee their security



## Other economic activities

7. Provide seeds and fertilisers with immediate effect and free of cost on a priority basis to women farmers, especially those who are single.
8. Access to interest free credit. Crop credit coverage is very low and that can be improved this season with complete interest subvention.
9. Ensure access to guaranteed prices and markets at the village level for diverse crops,
10. Support shorter value chains and promote localised production - consumptions cycles to cope with such crisis and reduce market dependency, promote greater investment in localised or cluster-based value addition
11. Open up government spaces for storage facilities and issue guidelines for the same
12. Provide bridge funds for FPOs and women's collectives
13. Expand Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) to include landless women.
14. Joint liability groups (JLGs), a model successful in Kerala and few other states could be strengthened by bringing JLGs to be brought on par with kisan credit card in terms of interest, insurance and other terms and conditions. This could be useful for numerous enterprise ideas floated by skilled returning-migrants
15. Expand PM Kisan Sanman Nidhi to include women farmers/irrespective of land holding and increase the amount from 6000/year to 15000/- which would support in farming activities that cannot be covered under NREGA
16. Emphasise on nutrition and food security based integrated agro-ecological agriculture and introduce mechanisms that support the availability of seed and other inputs to align with that
17. Ensure access to forests and commons, remove restrictions for forest dependent workers. No diversion without people's consent through due process. Respect their right to reject projects and rights to govern their own resources in PESA areas, and to benefit from revenues income from sale of NTFPs
18. Ensure access to grazing lands to livestock workers, feed, infrastructure, health care for all livestock needs to be provided. Common lands, banjar and poramboke lands must be surveyed and reclaimed from those who have encroached on those lands and have to be handed over to the gram panchayats for grazing animals and growing fodder for livestock and for common use.

In the long run this could be seen as an opportunity to rebuilding, supporting, and strengthening ecologically sound rural livelihoods of women. This would call for transformative financing, ensuring gender focussed and inclusive implementation and monitoring of schemes and programmes that have a bearing on food and economic rights, enhancing allocations for capacity building and awareness programme for basic knowledge of rights and entitlement.

However, it means that robust investments need to be made in agriculture, water, and other commons that women depend on and policies that help to protect and enhance their access to resources and not to dispossess them of it.







***Agricultural labourers buying greens from the women farmers' collective in Karnataka***



***A woman farmer selling butter from Hassan, Karnataka***



***Mangamma, a farmer member of Amrita Mahila Raitharu, a women farmers' collective, standing on her field, displaying mixed cropping - papaya, banana, greens, creepers, and vegetables***



***Jayamma, a member of Amrita Mahila Raitharu, a women farmers' collective in Karnataka, spraying jeevamruta.***



***Women farmers waiting to go back home after a hard day's work***



## About MAKAAAM

MAKAAAM is a national alliance set up in 2014 and has members that include women farmers, individuals, civil society organisations and networks.

Its main aim is to ensure recognition and voice to women as farmers as defined by the National Policy on Farmers 2007. This definition includes all the people engaged in agriculture and allied activities such as cultivators, agricultural labourers, forest workers, pastoralists etc. as farmers.

It has taken up campaigns, advocacy, and studies on various thematic areas- prominent among them are women and right to land and other resources; social and economic protection for women from farm suicide affected households; women forest workers fighting for their entitlements and participation in governance; exploring new organizational and institutional forms in collective farming and procurement and marketing of produce Farmer Producer Organisations.